

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Debbie Foster
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The children's home is run by a local authority. It is registered to accommodate up to six young people of either gender. The home provides care and accommodation to young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties on a long-term basis.

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 benefit greatly from the consistent care staff provide. Care is well planned and personalised to meet young people's individual needs. Staff are immensely committed and persevering in their aim to bring improved outcomes to young people. Young people live in a calm and caring environment which is enabling them to thrive and feel safe. They are starting to achieve educationally and some are starting to prepare for adulthood and develop independent living skills.

The views of young people strongly influence how care is provided. Young people have positive views about their care. They say, 'I like it here and am hoping to stay until I'm 18,' 'the staff do bother about you,' and, 'there isn't anything I'd change about living here.' Young people indicate they have positive relationships with staff.

Professionals commented, saying: 'Staff are committed to improving the lives of young people, supporting them back into education and working hard to keep them safer.'

There is an established, strong staff team who speak about their work with young people enthusiastically and are committed to supporting young people move forward positively in their lives. The management team ensures staff have good training and supervision opportunities. The manager demonstrates a commitment to reviewing the administrative systems which influence the quality of care provided to young people. However, six monthly summaries of the internal monitoring reports have not been completed and sent to Ofsted. Although the provider has a detailed monitoring system in place, it is not ensuring action is taken to address all the areas of

weakness and the deficiencies identified in a robust manner.

Other areas for development relate to some aspects of reporting fully on the progress young people are making and ensuring the hallways and staircase are maintained and decorated to a high standard. Not all the progress made by young people is evidenced in records and the reviewing of young people undertaking independence training is not taking place promptly to make adjustments where required to meet their needs fully.

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
31 (2001)	ensure that all parts of the children's home used by children are kept clean and reasonably decorated and maintained. This is in relation to the entrance hall, stairs and landings (Regulation 31 (e))	26/11/2012
11 (2001)	ensure that the registered provider makes proper provision for the welfare of children accommodated there. In particular, addressing deficiencies identified in the monitoring of the service in a timely manner. (Regulation 11(1) (a))	28/12/2012

Recommendations

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

- build further and ensure that there is a clear and effective procedure for monitoring and controlling the activities of the home. In particular, that the deficiencies found are promptly corrected and inspection requirements are implemented within the timescales set (NMS 21.1)
- ensure the reports to monitor the matters in Schedule 6 are compiled at six monthly intervals and a copy of every report sent to Ofsted within 28 days of completion (Volume 5, Statutory Guidance, 3.14)
- ensure that each child's placement plan is monitored by a key worker within the home who ensures that the requirements of the plan are implemented in full. In particular, recording and reviewing all the progress young people are making in line with their care plans, including health, safety, and independence areas, making the necessary changes where required. (NMS 25.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people's progress and outcomes are good because staff are persevering and supportive, creating opportunities for young people to reach their full potential. Young people benefit from the discussions and interactive activities that staff use to build relationships with them. As a result, young people gain good knowledge and understanding of their own backgrounds, and their view of themselves is increasingly positive.

Young people are well supported to attend all required health assessments and appointments and access specialist health support. For example, young people have access to services to assist with emotional well-being, drugs and alcohol. This ensures that young people's health is strongly promoted. Young people are at varying stages of learning how to plan and cook basic meals, dependant on their age and understanding. They learn about the importance of following a healthy diet. This is helping them to acquire useful life skills. Young people receive frequent guidance on other health matters from staff and other professionals.

Young people benefit from good opportunities and positive reinforcement on the importance to achieve in education. School attendance is good and academic achievement has improved for most young people or starting to progress for others. This is reflective on their starting point at the time of their admission to the home. A young person said: 'I've recently passed some of my GCSEs and I've just started at college. I like it, and it's going well.' An educational professional said: 'Due to a young person's increased attendance at school since they have lived at the home, the young person is on track to pass some GCSEs and we are now working to improve the predicted grades for this young person.'

Young people benefit from clear contact arrangements, understanding when they will see significant people, which helps them settle and enjoy seeing their families. Young people say, 'I see my nan a lot and can phone and speak to her any time', and, 'staff will drop me off and collect me, when I visit my family'.

Young people learn life skills through taking part in the tasks of running the home, such as cleaning and baking. Young people are also given help and support with social skills, laundry, healthy eating and budgeting. A young person undertaking independence skills training said: 'I'm not eating as much now that I'm cooking for myself; staff do help me but I can't be bothered.' Although some young people are making good progress preparing for adulthood, others are struggling with aspects of caring for themselves more. Therefore this is not bringing improved independence outcomes for all young people.

Quality of care

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

Young people are responding positively to the consistency, structure and routine that staff provide. Young people live in a stable, calm and supportive environment. Relationships between staff and young people are strong and positive. Three young people said that they 'get on with staff'. Most said there are particular staff who they would share concerns and worries with. Young people said they get on with the other young people that live in the home too; like most families they have times when they bicker. Staff and young people were seen joking, debating and discussing numerous topics throughout the inspection. A young person said: 'Staff do listen to us, well most of the time.' Staff work hard to promote a culture of respect and acceptance in the home. As a result, young people enjoy strong relationships with each other.

Young people know how to make a complaint. Staff always take young people's concerns seriously and make every effort to sort the problem out. A number of informal and formal consultation systems enable young people to share their views and wishes, and action is taken to support any reasonable request. Young people confirm their wishes, feelings and views are regularly sought and they feel involved in day-to-day decisions about the running of the home. The residents' meetings are used as a very positive forum to discuss topics which affect the young people's daily living. These include such topics as menu planning, social and leisure activities but also safeguarding issues which may have an impact for all young people.

Young people are cared for in line with their individual care plans overall. Young people confirm they are regularly consulted about decisions affecting their lives. Placement plans identify young people's personal needs and the individual support they require. Staff put young people's plans into practice to ensure their needs are met on a day-to-day basis. Care planning and staff practice recognise young people as individuals with different backgrounds, interests and views. This has helped staff develop a good understanding of young people's needs, and where appropriate, advocate on their behalf. This ensures young people receive an individualised service that is tailored to meet their diverse needs, including personal identity. However, on occasions, aspects of the placement plans are not always specific, for example, not detailing clearly independence work which is on-going. Although staff, young people and other professionals can demonstrate verbally where young people are making progress in their lives, this is not always fully evidenced or indicated in the care plans and monthly summaries.

The arrangement for promoting young people's health is good. All young people are registered with health professionals in the local area and are well supported to access these services in response to their routine and emerging health needs. Detailed health information records assist in highlighting historic and current healthcare interventions. This means staff have a good understanding of young people's individual needs and ensure they are met. Staff work collaboratively with specialist healthcare professionals, building young people's confidence to engage positively with these professionals over time. This collaborative approach to health means young people can access the right support, guidance and treatment they need to promote their physical and emotional well-being.

Staff recognise the importance of education, and this results in them being supportive of young people's education. They are proud and show a genuine interest in young people's achievements. Staff recognise the importance of self-esteem and the confidence of young people. In turn this assists young people to engage back into education, where there have been long absences prior to their admission to the home. Staff work extremely well with education professionals to ensure young people are given the opportunity to participate in full-time education and achieve success. They continue to break down the educational barriers that exist in some establishments. Staff comment they have built strong and positive relationships with a number of schools and agencies. This supports young people well. There are regular contact and meetings with school, college and alternative education links to discuss how best to support young people and make sure they have the best opportunities to succeed.

Staff encourage young people to positively plan their leisure and recreation time. They encourage young people to follow their individual interests. Young people say that they like to spend their time socialising with friends, going ice skating, having pamper nights, going to the cinema, and playing cards and board games.

Young people live in a suitably designed and, in the main, comfortable house. There is good access to shops and community amenities that young people regularly use. The house is clean and tidy. Young people say they like their home. Young people have been fully involved recently in making choices about the redecoration and personalising of their bedrooms. Most areas are decorated and furnished to a suitable or good standard. A new shower cubicle has been installed. Although it has taken the local authority approximately five months to replace fire doors around the home which were damaged, this is now complete and ensures the environment is safe. However, the hallways upstairs, downstairs and staircase are in a poor state of decoration. This has been the case since March 2012. The local authority has identified monies to redecorate this large area. However, until the inspection, no fixed date to complete this had been given. This work is now to be completed within three weeks. Young people's daily experience for months has been to live in a home where a large area has either had damaged wallpaper or bare plaster evident, looking unsightly and unkempt.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say that they feel safe. One young person said, 'I am safe here, the staff talk to me about how to keep myself safe all the time.' Staff state that they are always talking to young people about keeping safe; records and conversations heard during the inspection confirmed this. This develops young people's understanding about the reasons adults are concerned. As a result, young people's risk-taking behaviours reduce and they feel cared for and protected. Where particular risks are identified, consistently well-written risk assessments are recorded to help the staff understand what action to take to minimise the identified risks. These assessments

link into the placement plan, enabling it to be clearly cross-referenced to each area of work being undertaken. Risk assessments are updated regularly. The assessments help staff to know what is required to keep young people safe.

Very good safeguarding systems and procedures for staff to follow in the event of any allegation or suspicion of abuse exist. A member of staff is allocated a designated safeguarding role. The staff continue to be proactive on safeguarding matters, working closely with the chair of safeguarding and missing from home officers. The manager and staff have received child protection training which includes elements of child exploitation. Staff demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of the safeguarding procedures to promote and protect young people's safety and how they have put these into practice to try and safeguard young people.

Anti-bullying policies and procedures are followed by staff effectively. Young people say strongly that there is 'no bullying' at the home. Young people say, 'We do fall out sometimes but mostly we get on.'

Staff have protocols in place and instigate them when a child goes missing. After a period where there have been a high number of missing from home incidents, incidents of young people going missing are now reducing from the historical starting point of young people. The majority of young people are choosing to return to the home regularly, even though on some occasions they are late. The correct protocols and safeguarding procedures have been instigated to assist in the young person's safe return. Staff have always taken the right action, including liaising with the safeguarding professionals and the police, to ensure that young people's welfare is protected.

It is very rare that physical restraint is used, and rewards for positive behaviour are a focus rather than that of giving sanctions to manage behaviour at the home. Young people say that staff are fair when addressing issues which arise from their behaviour. Staff are trained in the provider's de-escalation policy and authorised intervention techniques. Record keeping is good and there is evidence that it is monitored to inform changes in future management of young people's behaviour further.

Regular fire safety checks, general checks and maintenance arrangements ensure the home is physically safe and is kept safe. All staff have received fire safety training to enable them to minimise the risks to young people in the event of a fire at the home. Staff and young people take part in fire drills at regular intervals to make sure they know what to do in the event of a fire.

Leadership and management

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

A Statement of Purpose is available to inform professionals and members of the public about how care is provided at the home; the age range and overview of the

type of needs the young people may have are included. There is a clear children's guide which is appropriate to the age and understanding of the young people accommodated. Young people confirm that they receive a copy of it before or on admission to the home so that they know what to expect while living at their new home.

Action has been taken to address most of the previous requirements and the recommendation made at the last inspection. A system for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals has been regularly implemented. Where sanctions, disciplinary measures or restraint are used, children are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records kept by the home. The majority of the identified areas of the environment which required improvement have been addressed. These included the decoration of the young people's bedrooms, replacing the shower and the replacement of fire doors that were no longer fit for purpose. However, the entrance hall, stairs and landing have not been decorated and the fire doors have taken several months for the local authority to replace. The timescales set by Ofsted to address these deficiencies have not been adhered to. This indicates that the provider has not taken action to remedy all the defects to improve the quality of the environment in which young people live.

There is a consistent core staff team which is supported when necessary by two bank workers employed by the local authority. The staff team has experienced some changes to the staffing complement during the last six months, due to redeployment within the authority and some staff sickness. This has affected staff morale at times but at the point of the inspection the staffing complement is more settled and morale has improved. Staff describe and refer to written policies, procedures and guidance which supports them well to care for young people in practice as 'useful' and 'helpful'. Staff describe management support and supervision as 'regular' and 'useful'.

All staff are trained in a wide variety of safety and childcare subjects. An on-going programme of regular refresher training is provided in a range of subjects to enhance the staff team's competency to meet the needs of the young people. The majority of staff have completed an appropriate course at level 3 in caring for children and young people or have commenced it. This assists in ensuring that young people are receiving care from competent staff that are appropriately trained to meet their needs.

Young people's general case file records and other written documentation overall are of a good standard. This facilitates good communication with other professionals as well as ensuring young people have a permanent and secure record of their history. Young people's individual case files are confidentially stored and are arranged in a manner that makes them useable by staff and yet accessible to young people. The young people know that they can have access to their records.

The manager has a system to monitor, report and evaluate the administration systems of the home. However, the recordings do not fully aid evaluation of the findings and show how the action taken by staff is improving the quality of care further. Although an internal monitoring report has been sent to Ofsted as required,

this was not a summary of the last six months. Regular unannounced visits from the provider to monitor and improve the quality of care at the home in detail takes place. However, the areas of weakness identified are not always acted upon, for example, the areas of the home requiring redecoration, refurbishment or replacement. Therefore, there is only adequate monitoring of the quality of care for the young people in the home to improve the quality of care for 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.