

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	18/04/2013
Inspector	Janice Hawtin
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Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	14/03/2013
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is owned by a private organisation. It is registered for the accommodation and care of two young people, of either gender, with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

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**.

The home provides a safe and stable environment in which young people thrive. Effective personalised and planned care is responsive to both the immediate and long-term needs of young people. They are happy in this home and make outstanding progress, often from a history dogged by poor school attendance and risk taking behaviour. One parent commented 'this home has been a life saver; I don't know where my child would have been without it.'

The mutually respectful relationships between staff and young people are instrumental in assuring young people's social, emotional and behavioural development. Behaviour is well managed through the use of positive interventions, high expectations and clear boundaries.

The home is managed by a dedicated and determined professional who has the confidence and support of the staff team. He understands the strengths of the home and takes action to tackle weaknesses which could disadvantage young people. A development plan is in place to support improvements.

Several doors did not close effectively, as required to prevent the spread of fire. This could compromise the safety of young people and staff. The manager took this very seriously and action was taken to address this issue during the inspection, and to prevent this being over looked in the future.

Many changes have been made following the change of ownership of this home. Improvements have been made to the care planning process, policy and practice

guidance documents and training for staff. Investment has been made to improve many areas of the environment including flooring throughout the ground floor of the home, decoration and refurbishment of young people bedrooms. Several areas, including the kitchen still need repair and maintenance and detract from what is otherwise a comfortable and homely environment. A further minor shortfall was identified relating to the detailed analysis of practical independence skills to improve planning for young people who are reaching adulthood.

The Statement of Purpose does not offer clear understandable information which can be understood by staff, young people and their parents. It has recently been produced following the homes change of ownership. It is inherently confusing, ambiguous and potentially misleading in parts. Some of the information required is missing.

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
4 (2001)	compile in relation to the children's home a written statement 'in these regulations referred to as 'the statement of purpose' which shall consist of a statement as to the matters listed in Schedule 1. In particular ensure this document is clear and understandable (Regulation 4 (1))	17/05/2013
32 (2001)	take adequate precautions against the risk of fire, in particular ensure that fire doors close effectively. (Regulation 32(1)(a))	17/05/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure the home is well maintained and decorated throughout (NMS 10.3)
- ensure independence skills assessments are evidenced and provided a focus for the homes contribution to pathway planning. (NMS 12.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Young people are helped to develop confidence and a positive self-view in this home where they are valued and treated with respect and understanding. The environment is personalised, photographs displayed around the home demonstrate the range of activities young people are involved in and contribute to them feeling valued. It is clear from the interaction between staff and young people that they have formed and sustain attachments to the staff. This improves their emotional resilience and instils feelings of security, enabling progress and the confidence to develop social, emotional and practical skills. A professional stakeholder reported that a young person, who was in a state of chaos prior to moving in, is now more settled than ever.

Contact with families is encouraged and supported by staff where appropriate. This helps young people to improve understanding of their background and maintain important relationships. A parent commented that she has 'a good rapport with staff who will help with any problems and support family relationships.' Adding that her child 'is a hundred times better since moving into this home, I would recommend it to others.'

Risk taking and unacceptable behaviour has diminished over time and young people are engaged in positive activities. They enjoy spending time with friends in the community, use community facilities such as the cinema and youth drop in centre. Some play team sports and they also go out together with staff to events and restaurants. This supports positive relationships in the home.

Health care planning is detailed and individualised. Staff support and encourage young people to take responsibility for their own health depending on their age and ability. They attend regular routine and specialist health checks and understand the importance of healthy eating. Risk taking behaviour has reduced since admission to this home. While one young person continues to smoke they understand the effect this is having on their health and have sort support to quit.

Young people benefit from attending school, attendance and attainment is exceptional, particularly considering their starting point which included both exclusions and poor attendance. They have aspirations for the future supported by high expectations and encouragement from staff. Young people are studying for exams and those approaching independence are also working towards vocational qualifications. This improves practical skills and employment opportunities.

Young people follow an independence programme which allows them to develop the skills and responsibilities needed to prepare them for adult life. One young person said they 'liked cooking and had been shown how to make things in the home and at school.' They are also looking forward to starting driving lessons.

Staff enable young people to express their views and feelings about the care provided. They commonly choose food, activities and décor. Their views and feelings are sort to inform planning meetings and where young people are daunted by professional meetings, staff advocate on their behalf to ensure their wishes are considered.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from the care provided, they confirm they are happy in this home and enjoy positive and mutually respectful relationships with the staff. Social workers, parents and other professional stakeholders report that young people are doing well in this environment. They receive regular updates about the progress of young people and appreciate the quality of care provided which meets the agreed aims and objectives of the placement.

Young people have detailed individualised plans which identify their care and development needs. This holistic and comprehensive approach to care planning ensures that young people are afforded opportunities to develop the skills and the knowledge they need. Those approaching adulthood follow an independence programme to develop practical life skills. Plans are regularly reviewed and are agreed by young people. The acquisition of practical independence skills are not well documented to evidence progress and add to the success of independence planning.

Plans and risk assessments identify triggers to difficult behaviour and detail action to support productive responses. Clear boundaries and expectations support the positive behaviour of young people, maintaining their safety and protecting dignity by avoiding the need for physical restraint.

Young people benefit from the support and encouragement provided to attend full time education. Staff work in partnership with education providers to avoid disadvantage and address any issues which may compromise attendance or attainment. Young people can attend mainstream local schools or specialist bespoke provision provided within the organisation.

Young people know how to make a complaint and can speak to staff if they have any concerns. A young person friendly complaint form is available which is easy to complete. The young person's guide to the home contains details of several independent associations who would provide support and guidance to if needed. In addition young people have contact with parents and other professionals who would advocate on their behalf. Independent visitors are available for young people who would benefit from additional independent support.

Young people influence all aspects of the care provided. They attend and contribute to care planning and review meetings where their views and wishes are taken into account and influence the decisions made. Consultation with young people affords them opportunities to provide feedback about the service and the staff. Young people routinely choose décor for the home, food and activities. The care provided is led by the needs of young people, making them feel valued and contributing to the success of placements. Individual support sessions provide regular opportunities for topical discussions and the early resolve of any concerns or worries. These are also used to inform and educate young people; examples include discussions about risk

taking, relationships and sexual health.

The rural location of the home is a deciding factor in choice of placement and benefits some young people, who may have a history of running away or involvement in drug use. Personalisation of the environment by and on behalf of young people adds to their sense of belonging. A decorating and refurbishment programme is underway and many areas have been improved including wooden flooring fitted throughout the ground floor and refit of young people's bedrooms. Other areas continue to require refurbishment and repair including the kitchen. These areas detract from what is otherwise a suitable and homely environment

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people confirm that they feel and are safe in this home. They can talk to any member of staff if they have any worries or concerns. They trust staff to act in their best interest to keep them safe. The staff have a good understanding of needs and provided regular individual support to young people allowing them to express issues and discuss problems.

Understanding the particular vulnerabilities of young people supports behaviour management. A professional stakeholder reported 'the young person is beginning to trust adults for the first time and this is allowing them to express emotions in a less destructive way.' Behaviour is managed through modelling, praise and reward. Young people approaching independence are enabled to take increasing responsibility for understanding and managing their own behaviour.

The use of sanctions is unusual and when applied they are reasonable, fair and related to the unacceptable behaviour. This allows young people to make sense of the consequences and think about their behaviour. The last physical intervention used in this home to prevent risk of serious injury was more than twelve months ago.

The home's rural location is often a deciding factor in the placement of young people who have a history of putting themselves at risk by being missing or running away. Negotiation with young people and understanding of risk factors has seen a significant reduction in these incidents since placement in this home. There has been just one incident since the last inspection.

Safeguarding of young people is a priority and all staff receive formal training so they know what to do and who to contact in the event of a child protection issue.

Children are protected by vetting of visitors to the home and a visitors' book is signed to keep a record of those entering the premises. The recruitment process is robust, recruitment records are maintained in the organisation's central office and a summary is kept in the home. This helps to protect young people from adults who may seek to do them harm.

Regular health and safety checks take place to protect young people. A fire risk assessment is in place as well as fire detection systems. Young people and staff practice evacuations so that they know what to do in an emergency. Several fire doors did not fully meet requirements, as closures needed adjustment. Action was taken to address this on the day on the inspection.

Leadership and management

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

The home is managed by a competent and experienced Registered Manager, and the progress made by young people is a credit to his leadership and the dedication of the staff team. Young people readily identify these carers as significant adults in their lives.

A development plan is in place and the manager and staff have a commitment to compliance and continuous practice improvement to benefit service users. Regular monitoring of the service by the manager ensures the welfare of young people allowing for identification of progress made and development needs.

Recent changes of ownership within the wider organisation have brought about noteworthy developments to benefit young people. Policy documents and records have been updated, improving access to information and guidance for staff. Young people's records are stored securely to avoid breaches of confidentiality.

Training opportunities for staff have improved. Young people benefit from a staff team who are well trained and equipped to meet their needs. All are either qualified or undertaking a minimum level 3 child care qualification which supports competence in their work practice. All mandatory training for staff is up to date and they can readily access specialist training to ensure proficiency. Working in partnership with other agencies has provided for staff to receive additional training and support in dealing with mental health and well-being. Support for staff is provided in several ways including team meetings, annual appraisals and personal development plans. Staff report that they receive the support needed and guidance is readily available alongside regular formal supervision. This ensures staff fulfil their roles and provide a high quality service to young people.

Action has been taken to address the requirement made at the last inspection. Bespoke windows have been made and are due to be fitted throughout the building within a week of this inspection. This will improve many rooms in the home which have far reaching views of the countryside. While there has been considerable investment in the environment some areas of the home are not well-maintained, and continue to need refurbishment or repair.

Regulation 33 visits to the home are completed to assure the quality of the service and further safeguard children and young people. These detailed reports are provided to Ofsted in a timely manner.

The Statement of Purpose has recently been produced within the wider organisation. It does not offer clear guidance for young people, parents or placing authorities. It is difficult to understand, and misleading in parts. Some information is missing such as the age range of children to be accommodated and arrangements for the supervision of staff. Of significance is the omission of transport arrangements to promote the education, recreational activity and contact with family and friends. The home is in a remote location without easy access to public transport. Some young people are also placed at a distance from their parents and friends. One of the two cars used by the home is no longer available. It is not now clear to young people if sufficient resources for transport are available and this is making them anxious. Professional stakeholders are also concerned about the recent loss of a car for the use by 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* and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes.