

## Inspection report for children's home

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	SC436826
<b>Inspection date</b>	23/05/2013
<b>Inspector</b>	Anne Bannister
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Full
<b>Provision subtype</b>	Children's home

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<b>Date of last inspection</b>	22/01/2013
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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. 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 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 make good progress in relation to their starting points in all aspects of their welfare and development. Young people may at times present very challenging behaviours that place themselves and others at risk. Strategies are in place to ensure that young people are being helped to realise how their negative behaviour impacts on others and may impact on their long-term economic future. As a result there has been some reduction in risk taking behaviours of young people.

Documentation relating to behaviour management and the use of sanctions do not currently show that both staff and young people reflect back on incidents and consider alternate more positive ways to handle issues in the future.

Young people's individuality is respected and promoted to help develop a positive self-image. Staff encourage young people to develop new skills and emotional resilience in preparation for adult life.

The areas for improvement include the fabric and furnishings of the home; a reviewing of the way the effectiveness of sanctions is recorded; a review of training strategies used to address bullying; and the need to ensure young people are made aware when it has been necessary to search their rooms.

## 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
17B (2001)	ensure the written record of any measure of control, restraint or discipline includes comment on the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure. Specifically this relates to the need to evidence that sanctions used are being effective in promoting positive changes in young people's behaviours (Regulation 17(3)(f))	28/06/2013
31 (2001)	ensure all parts of the children's home are reasonably decorated and maintained. (Regulation 31(1)(e))	28/06/2013

## Recommendations

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

- ensure the home only carries out searches of a child's room or possessions in accordance with the home's guidance. In particular there should be evidence to confirm that young people are told when a room search has taken place (NMS 3.20)
- ensure staff have the skills they need to intervene and reduce bullying behaviours by young people in their care. (NMS 3.12)

## Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **adequate**.

Based on their starting points, most young people are achieving good outcomes in areas of their lives. They benefit from the stability of their placement and the good levels of support afforded to them. This encourages young people to review and take responsibility for their behaviour and invest into a more socially acceptable lifestyle. As a result, young people are helped to develop socially, emotionally and educationally.

Upon admission, a common theme amongst young people is their previous rejection and non-conformity with their own education. Motivating them to re-engage with education is a major challenge for staff. The home's ethos, culture and working practices are geared towards promoting education, where the expectation is that young people will participate fully with their educational placement. None of the young people currently living in the home are engaged in full-time education

programmes. In house education programmes are in place to try to support and supplement their learning opportunities and help them achieve their potential. Young people's engagement with the support staff offer is inconsistent and as a result they struggle to achieve their full potential.

Young people have detailed health plans that ensure they receive advice and support with any health issues. They are aware of the potential health issues associated with issues such as smoking, alcohol and substance abuse. Despite this, some young people continue to engage in some of these activities. However, with staff supervision, they have reduced their involvement in these activities. Close liaison with local drug and alcohol services, and the looked after children nurse, ensures that young people receive the information to educate and support them to make an informed choices about all issues that affect their health and well-being.

Young people are positively engaged with the wider community, accessing local youth resources and a variety of activities that have provided them with good opportunities to socialise and make new friends.

The culture, ethos and working practices of the home support and encourage young people towards setting and achieving personal goals. Their individual needs are identified and any difficulties or challenges presented are dealt with sensitively and supportively, allowing young people to grow in confidence and develop strong relationships. Young people are supported to maintain positive relationships with key people important in their lives. They are supported to come to terms with, and understand, the issues which have led to them living at the home. They are encouraged to take responsibility for behaviours which may impact on planning for their futures and to be involved in decision-making about aspects of their lives. All young people have re-established and strengthened relationships with those people that are most important to them.

Young people are supported to develop skills for independence. Young people engage in activities that promote their independence and help to build self-confidence and enhance their life skills.

## **Quality of care**

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

Young people have detailed placement plans and their progress and achievements are detailed in monthly reports shared with placing authorities and families. Young people are consulted about their plans and are well supported to attend their statutory reviews. Staff have a clear understanding of routines and how to care for individual young people in line with their respective plans. Young people's cultural needs are addressed in a manner that promotes and affirms their identity and individuality.

Regular meetings are held with young people. These range from resident meetings to key worker sessions. These meetings ensure young people's views are sought

about all aspects of their care. Young people are empowered to make choices about their lives.

Young people's health plans show how their physical health needs and emotional well-being are met.. Staff understand the importance of a well-balanced diet and work hard to ensure young people enjoy a healthy and nutritious diet. Young people have easy access to community health services. Staff have an understanding of young people's specific health needs and have received training to ensure they understand and can meet individual young people's needs on a daily basis.

Young people have a clear understanding of the home's complaints procedure that is detailed in the children's guide. They feel confident that they can make a complaint and that it would be quickly and appropriately dealt with. However, young people say that prefer to raise issues informally with staff and have had no need to use more formal processes.

Staff are sensitive to the needs of the young people living in the home and aware of the need to balance respect for privacy with safety. Young people are alerted to potential dangers and the implications of their behaviours. They are encouraged to take responsibility for their behaviours. Room searches occur where serious welfare concerns are identified. Young people complain that they are not always informed when a room search has been carried. This practice is contrary to the company's policy on room searches.

Anti-bullying is promoted in the home in line with the company's policies and procedures. Information is made readily available for young people on how to contact external agencies for advice and support if they need to. Staff acknowledge that young people do not always get on with each other, and confirm bullying has recently been an issue in the home. The staff team work hard to create a harmonious atmosphere and openly challenge any form of bullying, including verbal abuse. However, one young person indicated that despite staff intervention, bullying is still a significant issue within the home.

The home is a large domestic property. Young people have the opportunity to personalise their rooms and communal rooms are homely and comfortable. However, not all areas of the property are well maintained. Paintwork and carpets, particularly in the hall and landing are stained. As a result of damage by young people there are a significant number of holes in walls and damaged internal doors in the building. The lack of a prompt repair or inadequate in-house repairs has resulted in further damage. At the time of inspection the fabric and furnishings in parts of the house did not encourage young people to feel a sense of self-worth and pride in their environment.

### **Safeguarding children and young people**

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

Not all young people feel secure and safe within the home. However, they can

identify adults they can talk to about their concerns. Young people's identified vulnerabilities are consistently addressed by staff, who regularly review each young person's risk management plan and recognise the importance of responding quickly to any changes in their behaviour.

Health and safety audits are carried out routinely on all activities young people engage in. The home has an up-to-date fire safety risk assessment. Other fire safety measures are in place including regular equipment checks and fire drills. All staff receive regular fire safety training. These actions ensure young people live in a safe environment and their safety is protected.

Young people are positively praised and rewarded for appropriate behaviour by the staff in the home; this is good practice because this builds upon young people's self-esteem and ensures that negative behaviour does not become the only focus of attention. However, there is a significant use of sanctions to redress negative behaviours. An adequate review of the effectiveness of sanctions in promoting positive changes in young people's behaviours is not undertaken. For example, some young people have significant reparation to pay for damage to the fabric and furnishings of the building. They say 'I owe so much money for the damage I've done. So if I get angry I may as well continue to smash things because I am never going to be able to pay it all back.' Sanctions have little impact on negative behaviours. There is insufficient recorded evidence to show how young people's challenging behaviours are monitored and reviewed to inform future practice or promote good relationships and socially acceptable behaviour.

Effective recruitment procedures are in place and nobody commences work at the home until all checks required by legislation have taken place. Such checks and procedures protect young people from being cared for by people who may cause them harm.

## **Leadership and management**

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

The home's Statement of Purpose accurately reflects the current aims, policies, practices and organisational structure. Young people are also given a meaningful children's guide during the admission process so they understand the services provided. Key workers also follow an induction programme with young people to ensure they are fully aware of their rights and also know the expectations of them.

The home is adequately managed by an enthusiastic committed team of staff and managers who are dedicated to improving outcomes for the young people in their care. Young people benefit from the care of a well-motivated and committed staff team that have or are working towards, suitable qualifications. Staff are able to access a range of training opportunities provided by the home. This ensures they have the ability to maintain and develop their professional practice and have good knowledge of current legislative requirements.

Staff have good support and supervision from the management team which assists them in their work and professional development. This shows there is a commitment to ensure that all staff are equipped with the skills required to meet young people's needs. Staffing levels are appropriate to the needs of the young people.

The home has developed good relationships with other local professionals working to promote the welfare of young people. However, there have been some incidents when young people's behaviours have caused considerable concern to a small number of local neighbours. The management team is taking steps to resolve these issues and to rebuild positive community relationships. The local community police officer is monitoring the effectiveness of the steps taken to address the perceived anti-social behaviour of young people and to enhance communications between all parties. Young people are responding positively to the actions staff have made to address the issues raised.

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. However, there content does not adequately reflect breeches in regulation identified in this 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* and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes.