

Inspection report for children's home

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| Unique reference number | SC367551 |
| Inspection date | 30/05/2013 |
| Inspector | Linda Brown |
| Type of inspection | Full |
| Provision subtype | Children's home |

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| Date of last inspection | 06/12/2012 |
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The service is a children's home that is registered to care for three young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home is managed by a limited private company.

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**.

Staff have a good knowledge and understanding of the need to protect and safeguard young people and the procedures to follow should any incident occur. Young people are kept safe from harm by good risk assessments; recruitment practice and staff awareness and understanding of the policies and procedures.

Young people are supported and encouraged to contribute to the decisions being made about their lives. Staff involve young people in both their care planning and the day-to-day running of the home. Professionals from a range of services are available to provide specialist support. As a result, all aspects of care planning are personalised to meet the individual needs of the young people.

Young people benefit from the positive relationships they develop with staff. Staff are child focused and spend a large proportion of their time talking to and completing activities with young people.

The manager is aware of the home's strengths and weaknesses. Good external and internal monitoring takes place and development plans address any identified areas for improvement.

Although there are many strengths at this home, the emergency referral and matching process has not been adequate and this has jeopardised the stability of the children and young people. As a result, there has been some extremely challenging and disruptive behaviour being displayed and an increase in the number of incidents, physical interventions and numbers of young people going missing. As a

consequence of the disruption and damage caused at the home, police involvement and complaints have risen. This has impacted on the young people who were previously settled at the home and making good progress.

Communal rooms are comfortable; any damage caused is quickly addressed to ensure young people are living in a well maintained clean and homely environment. Although, some of the damaged that has been caused in the young people’s bedrooms has not been repaired so promptly.

Young people continue to be cared for by a management and staff team who are committed to providing them with a caring and safe environment in which to thrive and develop. Management and staff have taken positive action to address the behaviour issues. Young people are aware of the expectations and rules of the home. Clear boundaries are in place that are supported by reward and incentive programmes. As a result, adequate progress is being made to address the difficult behaviours being displayed at the home.

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 |
|--------------|---|------------|
| 11 (2001) | ensure that the children's home is conducted so as to promote and make proper provision for the welfare of children accommodated there, with particular regard to the admission process, ensuring that the assessment of all the children's needs are based on the most up-to-date and statutory information. (Regulation 11(1)(a)) | 24/06/2013 |

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well maintained and decorated, with particular regard to repairing the damage in the young people's bedrooms. (NMS 10.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **adequate**.

Young people benefit from a staff team who provide them with individual support in order to develop confidence and a positive view of themselves. Key workers have a good knowledge of the background and individual needs of the young people and actively promote their confidence and understanding. This enables young people to make progress in developing a positive self-view, and making and sustaining relationships.

Health needs are identified within the placement plans. A range of support services are available to address the individual needs of the young people. Staff promote a healthy lifestyle and encourage healthy eating. This practice ensures that the health needs of children and young people are identified, supported and addressed.

The manager is committed to supporting young people back into education and from the time of a young person's admission liaises with the appropriate professionals to ensure an appropriate placement is identified. The majority of the young people are attending their educational provisions and achieving good results when judged from their starting point. For example, young people who previously had little or no education are now fully engaging and working towards taking their GCSE exams.

None of the young people currently living at the home are old enough to have pathway plans to prepare them for independence. Young people are supported and encouraged to develop their independence skills at a level that is appropriate, taking into consideration their individual needs. This gradual introduction into independence prepares them well for future semi-independent living and adulthood.

Young people are regularly consulted about the home and are encouraged to share their views and feelings. Young people confirm that staff do listen to their ideas and there are several examples of changes that have been made at the home at the request of the young people. The most recent being some young people not wanting to engage in group activities during half term. They requested to use the money for different activities and this was agreed.

Young people are supported to maintain contact with family, friends and significant adults in their lives. Contact arrangements for families and friends are clearly recorded in their plans. Young people speak positively about the support they get from staff to facilitate and support contact, for example, travel arrangements or supervision. Likewise staff spend time with young people explaining why it may not always be possible to maintain contact with some adults and friends in their lives.

Young people continue to have positive outcomes in some areas of their lives. However, the recent disruption has impacted on the outcomes for young people with particular regard to behaviour management. Young people who were previously developing the skills to manage their behaviours and were making good progress have been affected by the disruption and as a result are again displaying difficult and challenging behaviour. Some young people have opted to take themselves to their rooms to keep away from the disruption. This does not provide a homely

environment if young people feel it necessary to isolate themselves from the staff and other young people. For others the outcome has been another placement move, this creates more uncertainty and unsettlement in their lives.

Quality of care

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

Young people speak positively regarding their relationship with staff. It is evident that young people build supportive and trusting relationships with staff. Young people who have been recently admitted to the home also speak positively with regard to the relationships they have with staff.

The emergency admission process is not satisfactory. Detailed impact risk assessments are completed on all potential new admissions to the home. However, the home do not always have the most accurate statutory information available at the time of the placement; for example, looked after children review reports and placement plans. This has led to additional placement moves for some young people and has jeopardised the stability and progress of the young people living there.

Behaviour support plans and risk assessments provide staff with guidance on how to manage difficult and challenging behaviours. Risk assessments are continually updated and reviewed. However, since the previous inspection there has been a significant increase in the difficult and challenging behaviours being displayed and this has had a negative effect on some of the young people who were previously settled and making good progress at the home. These behaviours have also created problems in the local neighbourhood resulting in several complaints from neighbours who have called the police to the home. The management and staff have actively addressed the behaviours and concerns at the home and as a result, there is a recent reduction in the level of challenging behaviour being displayed.

Complaints are well managed. There are systems in place to address both external and internal complaints. Letters are sent to complainants, providing outcomes of the complaint and where appropriate offering consultation with the complainant to find an amicable solution. Young people who have recently moved into the home know about the complaints process and feel confident about who they would tell if they were unhappy about anything or anyone. Young people also stated that they were confident that staff would listen to them and take action to address their concerns. This is further supported by the information provided to young people regarding the independent advocacy service available.

Young people are actively involved in decisions being made about the home. Regular residents' meetings and key worker sessions provide young people with the opportunity to discuss their views and wishes. There are examples of young people's views influencing the choices made at the home. For example, young people choose activities they enjoy, such as visits to beauty salons. Likewise, staff spend time with young people to explain why it may not be possible to act upon their wishes in all cases.

Once in placement detailed plans are in place to provide staff with an understanding of the needs of individual young people and the services provided for ensuring that those needs are met. Health plans are included as part of the plan. Young people are supported and encouraged to attend their medical and specialist appointments as well as routine checks. Staff spend time with young people talking about the benefits of healthy living and the long-term effects of risk taking and harmful behaviour, for example, smoking and the risks they are exposed to when missing from the home. Plans are personalised to the individual needs of the children and young people and include any additional services and support that arise out of a young person's disability, ethnicity, race, sexuality, faith or belief. Young people have a good understanding of the plans in place for them. Although they are not involved in the actual writing of the plans, where appropriate they attend their meetings and are actively encouraged to share their views and wishes in order to contribute to the content of the plan.

Plans are on-going documents which are continually updated and reviewed. This practice ensures that young people understand and are consulted about their future plans and staff are provided with up-to-date information to enable them to provide individualised packages of care.

The educational needs of the young people are fully supported. Management and staff work closely with young people and education providers to ensure that young people are provided with the appropriate provisions to enable them to reach their full potential. However, not all young people at the home are engaging in education. Staff are not deterred by the reluctance of some young people to engage. Staff work with young people and education providers to find a suitable placement. Although attendance for some young people is still poor, through staff encouragement young people are starting to attend some of their sessions.

Young people are provided with a range of activities to support them to develop their social skills and individual interests. Activity planners are completed weekly and young people are encouraged to discuss ideas and plan their week's activities. Young people commented positively about a recent outing during half term to a water park. Although group activities take place, the individual interests of the young person are considered and alternative plans are made for individuals who do not want to take part in group events. In line with their contact arrangements children and young people are encouraged to have friends at the home, friends are invited to stay for meals and likewise young people also visit their friends' homes.

The communal areas of the home are clean comfortable and welcoming. Improvements have been made to the home since the last inspection. The home has been redecorated the carpet in the lounge has been replaced as well as new floor covering in the hall and kitchen. Although there has been damage to some of the furniture and fittings, staff have been prompt in ensuring their replacement or repair. This has resulted in the downstairs communal areas remaining homely and welcoming. Health and safety repairs are completed immediately. Bedrooms are personalised, however, some of the young people's bedroom furniture is damaged

and in need of replacement or repair. Although, this damage has been reported, the delay in repairing damage in young people's bedrooms means that young people do not always benefit from a comfortable and homely environment in all areas of the home.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people confirm that they feel safe at the home. Despite some young people only being at the home for a short period of time, they do confirm that they feel safe and are confident that staff will listen and act upon any concerns they may have.

Young people are cared for by staff who demonstrate a good understanding of the need to protect and safeguard young people. Staff are appropriately trained. Records of key worker sessions show the discussions that take place between staff and young people. A range of subjects are discussed to include looking at ways to keep themselves safe. Support is provided to young people from specialist teams, such as the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) team who provide support for young people who are at risk of sexual exploitation. Staff are all aware of the whistle-blowing procedure and are clear that they would have no hesitation in following the procedure in order to protect young people. Any allegations or concerns against staff are passed immediately to the local authority designated officer (LADO) in the safeguarding team and action is immediately taken to ensure the protection of young people.

There have been no incidents of bullying at the home. Staff are aware of the signs of bullying and information for young people is displayed in the home. Young people are clear that they would tell staff if they were unhappy about anything or anyone.

Young people are protected and cared for by staff that understand their vulnerability and are aware of the procedure to follow in the event of a young person going missing. Due to an unsettled period at the home there has been an increase in the number of incidents involving young people going missing. This has included the involvement of some young people who were previously settled at the home. There are effective protocols in place with the local police and safeguarding services which are followed in the event of a young person going missing from the home. In addition, staff carry out their own checks and searches for young people. A missing person's risk assessment is completed for each young person. These risk assessments are regularly reviewed and updated. These risk assessments provide staff with a detailed breakdown of what to do in the event of a child going missing.

Staff actively search for young people, involving the police where appropriate, in order to facilitate their safe return home. Although the home has experienced a rise in the numbers of missing person incidents, staff are working closely with young people and progress is being made to reduce the frequency and duration of time that young people are missing from the home.

Young people are supported and encouraged to behave appropriately. Reward systems are in place to promote positive behaviour. Behaviour support plans provide guidance for staff in managing individual behaviours. Staff are trained in the use of physical interventions with an emphasis on defusing and distracting young people. Staff are able to give examples of de-escalation tactics that work with different individuals, such as leaving the room or using distraction techniques. Staff are clear that interventions only take place as a last resort to protect young people or staff from further harm. Appropriate records are maintained of any physical intervention which are signed by young people and closely monitored by the manager. However, the recent challenging and difficult behaviours being displayed at the home has resulted in a significant increase in the amount of physical interventions and sanctions being used. The management are liaising with placing authorities to address the issues that have created this situation of unrest. This has resulted in some young people moving from the home. The management and staff are also looking closely at behaviour management techniques and working with young people to offer incentives in order to reduce the escalation of behaviours. It is evident that there is a change of atmosphere at the home and the action taken is reducing the incidents, however, the emergency placement process has impacted on and unsettled the young people.

Young people's protection is further supported by good health and safety routines and robust recruitment practice. Staff understand it is their responsibility to keep the building safe and effectively implement measures to do so. As a consequence young people are protected from accidents and injuries. Regular fire tests and drills take place and equipment is checked and serviced within the required timescales. Recruitment takes place in line with the provider's recruitment and selection procedures. Visitors sign in and are checked on arrival and where appropriate identification is required.

Leadership and management

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

The Statement of Purpose sets out the aims and objectives for the home and provides young people, families, carers and professionals with detailed information about the home. A young person's guide is also available. The Statement of Purpose clearly states that the home caters for emergency admissions. However, the decision to admit young people without ensuring all avenues have been pursued to gather the most up-to-date and relevant information has jeopardised the stability of the young people who were previously settled and making good progress.

The manager is experienced and qualified and is committed to improving the care for the young people at the home. He recognises the recent difficulties and has worked with staff, placing authorities and young people address the concerns, reduce the challenging behaviours and stabilise the home.

There are good systems in place to monitor the daily lives of the young people currently living in the home. Managers have a good awareness of the strengths and

weakness and development plans highlight timescales and areas for improvement. The manager continues to complete detailed monthly monitoring of the home. Improvements have been made in several areas. For example, a new debrief form has been introduced to ensure that young people are always given the opportunity to discuss their views and opinions after a physical intervention has taken place. Redecoration, new carpets and flooring have improved the appearance of the home.

Regular external monitoring of the service also takes place. Regulation 33 monitoring visits are undertaken monthly by an external visitor to monitor the overall care and welfare of the young people. The manager responds immediately to any actions raised as a result of these visits. Regulation 34 monitoring reports are completed and submitted to Ofsted every six months as required by Regulation. The manager consults with young people and gains feedback from stakeholders to incorporate into the report. These reports provide an analysis of the service to demonstrate that the manager understands the developmental needs of the service and is improving the quality of care in the home.

The Registered Manager takes an active role in the day-to-day management of the home. Staff feel well supported by a manager who is easily accessible. Good out-of-hours systems are also available. Staff speak positively regarding the support they receive from the management and each other.

Staff are very clear that, despite the challenges, the strength of the home is the commitment of staff to provide a nurturing, caring, homely and safe environment for young people to thrive. However, they feel a weakness is the matching process and the negative impact it can have on the stability of the home. Although impact risk assessments for potential referrals are shared with social workers, they also raise concerns regarding the matching process. This compromises the good work taking place at the home.

The home employs a core team of permanent staff who are supported when required by staff who are employed by the provider. There is a balance in terms of experience, age, gender and ethnicity. There are always adequate numbers of staff on duty. Due to unforeseen circumstances there have been some staff changes. However, where additional staff are required wherever possible the same staff are used to provide consistency for the young people.

Young people are cared for by staff that are trained and well supported. Staff have either completed or are in the process of completing the Diploma for Children and Young People's Workforce at an appropriate level depending on their position. All staff complete mandatory training. Staff speak positive with regard to training opportunities and in addition to the mandatory training some staff have completed specialist training in areas, such as drug awareness, sexual exploitation and understanding attachment. Future training is also planned and booked. Team meetings and staff supervisions are held regularly and this enables them to develop their practice to provide a consistent and effective service to young people.

The manager demonstrates an understanding of the importance to pass information

about serious events to the relevant professionals through the Regulation 30 notification process. Young people's records are up-to-date, well maintained and stored in a suitably secure place.

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.