

## Inspection report for children's home

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| <b>Unique reference number</b> | SC060758        |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 31/07/2013      |
| <b>Inspector</b>               | Jim Palmer      |
| <b>Type of inspection</b>      | Full            |
| <b>Provision subtype</b>       | Children's home |

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| <b>Date of last inspection</b> | 19/02/2013 |
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## Service information

### Brief description of the service

This privately owned home provides care and accommodation for up to five young people, who may have emotional and behavioural problems. Some young people may also have specific learning disabilities.

The provision is registered with the Department for Education to provide education on site for young people who live in one of the three homes run by the provider.

### 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 continue to benefit from the impact this service has on their development. Good, consistent, child care practice linked to dedicated staff teams contribute to young people's incremental development. One young person said, 'This place is brilliant, it is the best place I have ever lived'. There is a very strong ethos of child-centred working and relationships between young people and staff are very good and clearly based on mutual respect.

The house manager provides strong leadership and direction to staff; she is supported in that role by a recently appointed house supervisor. Staff are well trained and supervised. Staff demonstrate a strong commitment to achieving good outcomes for young people and are enthusiastic and positive about how they work towards meeting young people's needs. This is an area of particular strength within this service.

Each of the issues arising from the last inspection has been effectively addressed and the home has introduced further improvements since that time. For example, they have introduced the concept of reflective practice as a means of driving continuous improvement.

Three good practice recommendations were raised on this inspection, these relate to the use of restraint, reviewing the policy on self-medication and monitoring the

quality of records.

There are two statutory requirements raised, these relate to the employment of staff and young people's access to communication. None of the areas of weakness identified have a significant impact on the safety of young people.

The manager provides very good leadership and direction; the manager and staff team are committed to driving up standards and achieving successful outcomes for children.

## 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   |
|--------------|--|------------|
| 26<br>(2001) | ensure the registered person shall not employ a person to work at the children's home unless that person is a fit person to do so (Regulation 26(1) ( a )  | 01/09/2013 |
| 15<br>(2001) | ensure that children accommodated in the home are provided with access to a telephone which they may use without reference to any person working in the home, on which to make and receive telephone calls in private. (Regulation 15(4)(a ) | 01/09/2013 |

### Recommendations

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

- ensure that restraint is not used to force compliance with instruction, namely in order to prevent a young person from leaving the home without authority (NMS 3.14)
- ensure that the policy on self administration of medicines is reviewed, specifically that young people who wish to keep and take their own medicines, can do so safely (NMS 6.14)
- ensure that all records are monitored to in order that they comply with the homes policies and the Children's Homes Regulations, namely that they are sufficiently detailed and are signed and dated by the person making the entry (NMS 22.2)

## Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people continue to make good progress in developing successful strategies for managing their behaviour and strengthening their emotional resilience. Young people recognise the changes that have taken place since living in the home and feel positive about them. They have a greater understanding and confidence in their relationships with others and their ability to compromise to see other people's perspective. This has increased their self-esteem. All young people spoken with say their self-esteem and confidence has increased substantially since living in the home. This is confirmed by parents, placing social workers and independent reviewing officers.

Young people say that they enjoy the work they are undertaking at school. College and attendance by all young people is good. Young people's education reports provide evidence of good steady progress being maintained. Older young people are now in a position to embark on courses at their local colleges, which in some case exceeds expectations from the time when young people's placements started.

Young people's health is good and their identified health needs are well met. Young people benefit from the implementation and regular monitoring of their individual health care plans. Young people are encouraged by staff to take some personal responsibility for promoting their own good health and as a result can recognise the benefits of eating a balanced healthy diet and participating in regular exercise.

Staff are pro-active in providing support to young people who find maintaining medical appointments difficult, as a result general levels of health are continuing to improve. Staff promote regular reviews of young people's health needs including the review of long term medication.

Young people say that there is a wide range of leisure and social activities for them to participate in. These include football, gym, horse riding and some young people particularly enjoy looking after and caring for animals which develops a sense of responsibility toward others. Young people recognise the positive health and social benefits of participating in physical activity.

## Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from having highly personalised placement plans. Each young person has a dedicated staff team specifically selected to meet their needs. This approach leads to consistency of practice on each shift, a staff team that is knowledgeable of young people's needs and the implementation of consistent strategies in meeting those needs. Each young person has a member of their dedicated staff team working on every shift. This enables effective and consistent practice and strong and effective relationships to develop. Young people are

consulted about the appointment of their key workers and members of their staff team. Despite this highly individualised approach to working with young people, all staff members have a thorough knowledge of the needs of each young person; liaison between each team is very good. The quality of relationships between young people and staff is very palpable and evident in this home. This is strength within this service.

Thorough referral systems are in place to consider whether the home is able to meet young people's needs prior to admission. The home is pro-active in seeking full information from placing local authorities. Effective pre- placement planning is central to the staff team's success in providing good quality, consistent care for young people.

Staff and managers act as strong advocates for young people and will challenge placing authorities if they feel young people's interests are being best met. An example of this is the discussion with placing authorities regarding the appointment of independent visitors or advocates for some young people.

The home sets high but achievable expectations for young people, in all areas. They support and take an active interest in young people's educational progress and can provide direct support to young people while they are in school. Education plans demonstrate the same highly individual approach, which leads to engaging young people and promoting school programmes that inspire and motivate young people.

Young people's physical and emotional health needs are well met. They are each able to access a full range of health care services and specialist psychological services if needed.

All health appointments are thoroughly recorded along with the results of any health assessments. All staff receive training in the safe administration of medicines. There are robust systems for the safe storage and administration of medicines. All stocks of medicines accord with the record held. The risk of medication errors is effectively managed; however the home is not pro-active in promoting young people's independence with regard to self-medication.

Young people's access to telephone is inconsistent. All young people have access to a telephone with pre-programmed numbers to enable them to contact appropriate agencies privately if they wish to raise a concern. Some young people have their own mobile telephone which they hold at appropriate times of the day on which they can make and receive calls without any supervision. Other young people who do not have their own telephone have to request the use of a telephone and staff dial the number from an approved list. This does not always accord with the contact details in the placement plan.

Young people are able to contribute to the day-to-day running of the home, the décor, menu planning and activities. They are also encouraged to attend placement reviews and meetings to plan their futures. This continues to involve the use of negotiating skills and being prepared to compromise. Young people share the

preparation of meals on a rotational basis, however will frequently prepare meals when it is not their time on the rota.

The home is well maintained, furnished and decorated. Part of the home was being decorated at the time of the inspection. The building and gardens support the needs of each young person in accordance with the Statement of Purpose.

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

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

Staff are very aware of their responsibilities in promoting the safety and welfare of young people. There are satisfactory systems in place for notifying local authority designated officers (LADO) of any child protection concerns. These are known and understood by all staff spoken with. All staff have regular child protection training and are familiar with procedures. Managers liaise regularly with the LADO if they have any concerns. All concerns are appropriately referred and recorded.

There are rigorous policies in place to maintain good practice in staff recruitment and the Registered Manager has attended safer recruitment training. Staff recruitment practice is generally good; however there was one record that indicated that a staff member had been offered employment prior to satisfactory statutory checks and references being returned. While this may have been a typing error, if this was the case, the shortfall was not identified in the subsequent quality assurance audit. No risk to any young people occurred as a result, as the staff member did not actually commence working until after the checks were successfully returned.

Young people say they feel safe in the home, however commented that while staff remain vigilant and respond to incidents of bullying, their intervention is not always successful. There are effective systems in place to promote the safety of young people if they are absent from the home. The home follows local authority and police protocols on missing young people. The home is acutely aware of the vulnerability of the young people they look after if they are missing from home and of the potential risks, including child sexual exploitation. Each young person has an individual risk assessment identifying levels of vulnerability and placement plans details how any unauthorised absences are to be managed. Placing social workers and parents are happy with the way in which the staff manage unauthorised absence. The Statement of Purpose (SoP) stated that staff would if necessary use physical intervention to prevent a young person from leaving the home. This practice was discussed during the inspection and the SoP is now amended to delete that reference.

The home is effective in managing young people's behaviour. Staff are trained in positive behaviour management techniques. This promotes positive intervention and the use of praise and reward. As a result, the number of sanctions and restraints issued have reduced. When sanctions and restraints are used these are recorded appropriately. These records are regularly monitored by the manager and senior managers. Some of the records lack specific detail and are not all signed or dated.

The manager has identified this in regular audits and is taking appropriate management action to raise the quality of these records.

Young people, parents and placing social workers have commented on the success of the approach to behaviour management. Each young person has a behaviour management plan, which identifies strategies for successful working with each young person. Young people acknowledge the developments that have taken place. All young people are now offered to opportunity for a de-brief following any physical intervention. Staff also have the same opportunity and the home has introduced reflective practice sessions since the last inspection.

Young people's safety is promoted by the use of regularly reviewed risk assessments for individual young people, the building and equipment and activities. All staff sign each risk assessment as known and understood. All health and safety checks are regularly conducted and monitored by one of the directors.

## **Leadership and management**

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

The house manager provides excellent leadership to the staff team. There is a very strong focus on the needs of young people and achieving successful outcomes for them. The manager is energetic in striving to improve the quality of service for young people and is clearly committed to seeking young people's views; this ethos permeates throughout the staff team.

Staff morale is high and staff comment that they feel well led, well supported and well trained by the company and manager. Some staff comment that they feel well supported by the manager and organisation regarding personal as well as professional matters.

The manager, house supervisor and staff display a sound knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the service. There is a detailed service development plan which sets measurable targets. The home has a culture of open discussion and learning from previous inspections. Each of the three good practice recommendations and the one statutory requirement arising from the last inspection have been implemented. Some areas that arose during this inspection were rectified during the course of the inspection, displaying a high commitment to driving continued improvement.

All staff are aware of their responsibilities and comment on receiving effective supervision, training and development. The company promote staff development and promotion; this is demonstrated within the current leadership team. There are high staff to young person ratios and each young person has their own dedicated team. The staff team represents a good gender and skill balance; as a result young people's individual needs are well met.

The practice of the service is thoroughly monitored by visiting managers, the house manager and senior managers. Copies of reviews of the quality of care are now



being received by Ofsted. Young people and parents views are sought regularly through the monthly visits under Regulation 33. The manager's monthly reports under Regulation 34 are detailed and cover all required areas.

Young people's case files are generally well maintained and hold all key information, however this could not always be easily retrieved from archived documents and not all entries in several records were signed or dated by the person making the entry.

## 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.