

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC010090
Inspection date	31/10/2013
Inspector	Jacqueline Malcolm
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	16/01/2013
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is run by a private company and provides care and accommodation for up to four young people 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**.

Young people's care needs are highly supported, nurtured and promoted by a caring, child focussed staff team. Young people's plans are tailored to meet their needs and contribute to their good progress from their starting points. Young people enjoy living at the home and feel that staff have helped them change some of their negative behaviours. A young person said, 'it's the best place in the world.' The home has effective working partnerships with external services. This ensures that young people can promptly access them, in particular, education and health. Stakeholders comment positively about the services provided by the home. One said, 'I would like to add that this children's home offers outstanding child care' and 'working with them, they have gone over and above the norm, developing a holistic approach to the family of the child they have in care.'

Young people confirm that they feel safe and protected from significant harm. They feel well cared for, which gives them a good sense of stability and security. Relationships between staff and young people are strong and staff members provide good role models. However, an incident construed as playful behaviour between a young person and a casual member of staff undermines the young person's privacy, dignity and safe care. The home has taken the matter very seriously and they are addressing the concern. Children's rights are actively promoted in the home and young people feel that their wishes and feelings are acted on. Young people's confidence in their abilities are enhanced by their engagement in a range of activities.

Staff feel well supported. They are regularly supervised and a number are working towards a recognised child care qualification. The Registered Manager leads by

example and he is committed to improving the lives of the young people who live at the home. However, a culmination of staff shortages in the management structure and delays in recruiting high calibre senior and care staff has hindered timely progress. This matter has since been resolved and an action plan has been developed between the Registered Manager and senior management to accelerate the improvement agenda. Although there are many strengths in this home, monitoring of the quality of care has missed some practice shortfalls. This is with respect to recognising a shortfall in the restraint records and risk assessments in relation to some young people's activities. Ofsted is unable to monitor significant concerns effectively because the registered provider has on one occasion, omitted to notify the regulator of significant events in a timely manner.

This inspection raises three requirements and one national minimum standard. Although the areas for improvement are mostly weighted in leadership and management and is reflected in an adequate judgement; this does not have a significant impact on young people's outcomes.

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 suitable arrangements to ensure that the home is conducted in a manner which respects the privacy and dignity of children accommodated there. This specifically relates to appropriate and safe staff boundaries and professional behaviour in the home (Regulation 11(2)(a))	29/11/2013
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose which shall include the matters listed from (a) to (i) of this regulation (Regulation 17B(3))	29/11/2013
30 (2001)	ensure that in relation to a children's home, any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 5 takes place, the registered person shall without delay notify the persons indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of the table. (Regulation 30(1))	29/11/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure the registered person takes action to address any issues of concern that they identify or which is raised with them. (NMS 21.9)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people feel settled and contented at this home, which significantly contributes to their progress from their starting points. The positive attachments formed between young people and staff help them to develop an exceptionally good insight into their personal histories. Young people are able to reflect on their life experiences and for most, they learn to constructively manage their emotions. This shows good self-control and resilience. Young people's lives are enhanced by the strong contact arrangements that enable them to stay connected with their family, friends and significant others. This promotes young people's identity and maintains their attachments. One stakeholder said, 'staff were more than willing to facilitate contact between the young person and his family. Contact arrangements were always well prepared and contact agreed beforehand'.

Young people understand the importance of healthy lifestyles. For example, young people have a good awareness of the risks associated with smoking, alcohol and drug use. Young people have prompt access to a range of health services that meet their physical, emotional and psychological health needs. A stakeholder confirmed that young people have 'regular contact with looked after children's nurse, dental and GP as appropriate'.

Overall, young people have good education attendance and attainment and show potential to reach their individual goals. Young people who receive home tuition are working towards inclusion into the school environment. Comments from some young people indicate that they enjoy school. They are successful in making friends, which integrates them into the school community and a social circle. Young people also benefit from learning outside of school, showing their talents and skills in areas, such as artwork, cooking and baking in the home. Young people's access to leisure facilities in the community and further afield reduces their feelings of isolation and increases their confidence in their abilities. Young people's participation in events, such as Halloween and bonfire night provides them with a sense of fun and celebration of seasonal events.

Young people have good independence skills or they are making positive progress to develop skills that will help them to be self-sufficient when they make the transition into independence.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy positive and constructive relationships with staff, which makes them feel, valued and cared for. This is exceptionally good and is underpinned by

trust, nurturing and mutual respect. Young people like living at the home and they make positive comments, such as, 'I have a good relationship with staff' and 'they have really helped me' and 'the staff are really good'. Young people understand the rules and boundaries in place and some say this makes them feel safe and enables them to reflect on any negative behaviours presented by them. However, a recent incident at the home that was construed as playful behaviour between a casual member of staff and young person does not promote young people's safe care, privacy and dignity. This matter is currently under investigation and has been taken very seriously by the home. Young people say that they think the sanctions are fair when their behaviour is poor. One young person was of the opinion that their recent sanction was acceptable to them because they said that they were, 'really nasty to staff and I deserved it.'

Young people benefit immensely from high quality care planning in consultation with young people, their social workers and parents as appropriate. Good, child centred care planning meets young people's unique needs and ensures that staff know how to care for them. Stakeholders comment positively about how the home promotes positive outcomes for young people through placement planning. One said, 'staff were clear of the child's plan and worked well to improve positive outcomes' and 'the managers are continually trying to think of innovate ways to promote the well-being of young people in their care. They actively engage with other services and work well with other agencies. They appear to have a good understanding of individual children. They provide opportunity for reflective practice within the unit.' Young people's needs arising from their cultural needs and personal identity are well met and promoted.

Young people feel that their wishes and feelings are listened to and acted on. Staff are strong advocates for the young people and they ensure that the voice of the child is heard and acted on. This promotes young people's rights. Young people are aware about their right to complain. Their involvement in house meetings, key work sessions and informal discussions provide a range of opportunities for young people to express themselves.

Young people benefit from exceptionally good health and education arrangements. For example, the home provides a healthy environment and has effective links with health professionals, such as the looked after children's nurse. They discuss issues, such as promoting sexual health and healthy lifestyles. This teaches young people how to keep themselves self. The arrangements for medication administration are safe and effective. Young people receive homemade nutritious meals and can prepare their own drinks and snacks. Staff actively promote the education of young people in consultation with education professionals. This demonstrates that staff value education and have high aspirations for young people. Staff ensure that young people attend and engage in their education placements and they are kept informed about their progress. This ensures that young people get the right support and guidance to ensure that they are educated and have an opportunity to reach their goals.

Young people live in good accommodation. The house and cottage, which is located

on the same site, provides a clean, comfortable homely environment that reflects a family home. Young people have personalised their own rooms to suit their individual tastes and personalities. This values young people's choice and enables them to feel comfortable in their personal space.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people confirm that they can approach any member of staff to discuss any concerns about their safety or their past care and treatment. All young people, without exception say that they feel safe and protected by staff. Young people said, 'yes, I feel very safe. Fire drills, doors locked at night and waking nights (night-staff) keep me safe and secure' and 'I feel safe because you know that staff care about you'. Stakeholders are confident that young people are safely cared for. One professional said, 'Staff understand how to protect children and safeguard children. The children in their care are very vulnerable'.

Young people do not identify bullying as an issue. They rarely go missing from home, but when they have gone missing, they do not go far and they return quickly. Staff follow robust missing from care procedures which promotes young people's safety. Most young people's risk assessments are comprehensive and up to date, but they are not all up to date. This undermines young people's health and safety.

Young people's challenging behaviours are well managed. Good behaviour management strategies help young people to understand and manage their feelings. This minimises the need for physical restraint. Young people said that staff, 'calm me down' and 'I have only been restrained four times since moving in. They don't want to do it unless they really have to'. Staff record the incidents of restraint, but there has been one occasion when a physical intervention was not recorded. Although there is minimal impact, this does not provide for full accountability of staff practices.

Young people are safeguarded by appropriate recruitment processes. Young people feel assured that only suitable people are appointed to care for them. One young person said, 'I don't think that (Registered Manager) would employ them if they were not good.' Furthermore, visitors to the home are checked and their credentials are recorded in the visitor's book. These good practices prevent unsafe people from having contact with young people.

The home environment provides young people with good physical safety. Young people participate in fire drills. This ensures that they know how to safely evacuate the home in the event of a fire. Regular checks on gas and electricity appliances ensure their continued safe use. This protects everyone.

Leadership and management

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

The home is well managed by an experienced Registered Manager. He is fully committed and passionate about providing young people a secure and nurturing home. The home was judged to be making good progress at the last inspection and showed capacity to improve. No recommendations or requirements were made at that time. However, in recent months, changes to the management structure have impacted on the home's usual strong track record of having a consistent, fully effective and efficient management team. This has been weakened by the resignation of an established deputy manager and two team leaders within months of each other. The deputy manager's post has since been filled. This has provided valuable support to the Registered Manager and the existing staff team, who are reforming due to new staff appointments. A team leader has recently started in post and interviews are impending to appoint a second team leader in order to strengthen the management team.

The shortfall in management capacity has meant that the Registered Manager has at times, extended their responsibilities to carrying out some child care duties. This does not ensure clear levels of delegation and accountability between management and staff. Of particular concern and until recently, the manager has not received professional supervision for at least three months. This matter has since been resolved. An action plan has been developed between the manager and senior management to secure much needed staffing resources. The manager has a clear vision of what needs to be achieved with the appropriate support that is now in place. Internal and external monitoring of the quality of care takes into account the views of young people and stakeholders. However, internal monitoring is not sufficiently thorough. For example, at least one physical intervention has not been recorded in the restraint book. Not all young people's risk assessments are updated to include all risk management strategies and practices. For example, smoking, drinking alcohol and the use of punch bags. This does not promote safe care practices within clear and appropriate parameters.

The home's Statement of Purpose is comprehensive and accessible. Young people also receive a children's guide that provides key information about the home, including the complaints process. One external complaint has been resolved. This promotes good relationships with the local community and neighbours.

Staff feel well supported, supervised and receive mandatory training. Most are qualified or are working towards an approved childcare qualification. This helps to improve the knowledge and working practices of most staff. Despite some members of staff leaving since the previous inspection, cover has been provided from within the staff team and by casual staff. This ensures that the level of service to young people and their families is maintained. Young people's comments about changes in the staff team demonstrate that although they do not like staff leaving, they have felt well supported to come to terms with the situation.

The manager notifies the appropriate people and takes action when significant events occur. However, there has been at least one occasion when a notification was not received by Ofsted in a timely manner. This impedes the regulator from effectively carrying out its safeguarding responsibilities to ensure young people's

protection.

Young people benefit from records that demonstrate their progress and contribute to their future plans.

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.