

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC039213
Inspection date	22/01/2014
Inspector	Sandra Jacobs-Walls
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

This is a privately-run children's home. The home provides care, support and accommodation for to up to six young people of either gender. The service accepts referrals for young people who have emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Currently the home does not have a Registered Manager; the previous manager left the service a week prior to the inspection. The home's former deputy is currently the acting manager.

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**.

The overall effectiveness of the home is judged to be adequate. Young people generally make good progress while in placement at the home. Staff provide an acceptable level of care and are interested in young people's progress and development. Some young people are engaged in education and most live healthy lifestyles.

The staff group encourage young people to take responsibility for their lives and provide clear boundaries and structure. The quality of the relationship between staff and young people is very good and young people feel well cared for. Young people's positive relationship with staff contributes to them feeling safe. Young people's individual identity needs are very well met by the service.

The home is currently recruiting a new permanent manager. The staff group are well established; they receive appropriate support and supervision and training opportunities are adequate to meet the needs of young people.

Monitoring systems are appropriately robust and as a result, managers have insight to the home's strengths and weaknesses. The one recommendation made at the last inspection have been successfully resolved.

Some shortfalls are noted. The home's staff training programme is not sufficiently challenging and not all staff have completed first aid training. Some staff records are insufficiently detailed or incomplete and the home's development plan is basic and does not outline well plans to promote the home's continued improvement.

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
27 (2001)	ensure that all person's employed receive appropriate training. In particular in first aid. (Regulation 27(4)(a))	31/03/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure that information about the child is recorded clearly and in a way which will be helpful to the child. In particular to ensure records of risk assessments, behaviour management plans and recording tools used when young people are missing are completed comprehensively (NMS 22)
- ensure that the home's development plan is sufficiently detailed in outlining plans for the improvement in service provision (NMS 15.2)
- ensure there is a good quality learning and development programme which staff are supported to undertake. (NMS 18.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

The outcomes for young people are positive while in placement at the home. Young people receive individual care that meets their needs and young people are generally aware of the objectives of the placement. Young people develop a positive self view and develop knowledge and understanding of their background. One young person comments, ' This is the best home I've been in and I've lived in six. The staff are all fine and the other kids are alright'.

Young people live healthy lifestyles. They have good access to and make good use of primary care and any specialist health care services required. They enjoy healthy,

well-balanced and varied meals which meet young people's religious and cultural obligations. For example Halal meat is provided for those of the Muslim faith and vegetarian meals are offered to young people who request it.

Young people's educational achievement is promoted by the placement. Staff demonstrate a commitment to ensuring young people make the most of their educational opportunities and that appropriate educational resources are secured. Where young people do not attend school, young people benefit from the opportunity to receive educational input at the home. Young people's educational needs are consistently explored in statutory looked after children reviews and in key work sessions to encourage educational attainment.

Young people have good opportunities to participate in a range of recreational activities that are of their liking. The home is well equipped with DVD's, books, board and computer games for young people's use. Young people regularly access the community for leisure; they regularly attend cinema, swimming and ice skating activities.

Young people feel that staff are interested in their views and opinions and frequently engage in dialogue with staff. This was observed during the inspection. Young people comment that this open communication within the home enhances their feelings of trust with the staff group and enables them to talk freely. Young people also benefit from the home's formal monthly residents' meetings which is another forum for them to share their views and contribute to the running of the home.

Older young people preparing to leave local authority care benefit from the support of staff in developing their independence. Young people have good access to information and practical training to enhance their ability to manage their own affairs. All young people in placement at the home have the opportunity to develop basic independent living skills, and most demonstrate skills in general household tasks.

Young people enjoy appropriate contact with their family when it is safe for them to do so and is in accordance with local authority care plans. Young people know that family members and friends are welcome to visit them at the home if they so wish.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy good relationships with staff and feel this impacts positively on the care they receive at the home. Young people enjoy working with the entire staff team and feel staff genuinely care about their well-being and are interested in what young people have to say. Staff are equally positive about their relationship with young people and express enthusiasm and passion in supporting young people to make progress while in placement. One staff member comments, 'We really do care for young people and want to see them do well. We need to treat them well, like our own families'. Young people share constructive relationships with each other and

generally enjoy each other's company.

Young people are largely well behaved; there have been few critical incidents since the last inspection. Staff ensure that young people's case files evidence risk assessments, although some of these are insufficiently detailed and do not highlight all known risks. This is important to ensure all staff are alerted to potential risks and that there are effective strategies in place to address risks posed. Staff also do not consistently complete individual behaviour management plans. This is to ensure that all staff have a good insight into the management of undesired behaviour.

Young people have access to the home's complaints procedure and understand how to make complaints. Young people also have access to independent advocates if they so wish. Since the last inspection no complaints have been made against the service by young people. Complaints received from other parties have been managed promptly, appropriately and in accordance with the home's written complaints procedures.

Young people are cared for in line with their individual placement plan; both staff and young contribute to these plans. The home's initial placement planning process is consistently robust. For example staff record referral information in detail and this is considered by managers. Staff ensure that placement planning meetings are always convened and as required, staff chase missing information from the placing authority. This supports effective placement planning and ensure that young people, staff and local authority personnel are in agreement with the purpose of the placement from the outset.

Staff are highly effective in addressing young people's identity needs, and they pay good attention to issues of equality and diversity. Young people's case files outline specific identity needs which staff sensitively explore with them. Staff ensure they seek information and advice to support this effort. For example, in recent weeks staff have researched relevant information about the travelling community to better address the needs of some residents. Staff ensure young people are accompanied to identified places of worship and that holy books and culturally appropriate meals are available as required. Young people are supported by staff to discuss issues of sexuality in a safe environment. As a consequence, differences are embraced by the service and young people benefit from the positive exploration of their identity and backgrounds.

Staff encourage young people to live healthy lifestyles. For example, they promote healthy eating and ensure that meals prepared are in accordance with young people's indicated preferences. Staff organise and facilitate recreational activities that promote young people's participation in physical exercise. This includes ice-skating activities and young people's use of the home's garden boxing bag. Young people are promptly registered with primary care health services. As appropriate, staff support young people to make and attend health care appointments and young people's case files evidence health care plans. Staff routinely advise young people about the hazards of alcohol use, smoking and substance misuse in an effort to reduce and eliminate their use of these substances.

All staff have received medication training and staff management of young people's medication is consistent and safe. Some staff however, are yet to complete first aid training. This is to ensure young people can receive appropriate emergency treatment if required.

Staff work well with external educational professionals to promote young people's educational achievement.

Staff ensure that young people have access to appropriate education and training resources to address their individual learning needs. Staff and relevant professionals continue to work collaboratively to encourage some young people to participate in educational home tuition, which they remain reluctant to engage with. The home is adequately equipped with relevant learning materials and young people have access to useful resources via educational websites. Where young people do not attend school, the home facilitates home based learning.

Young people have access to and enjoy a choice of recreational activities, which the home funds. Staff encourage young people to identify their preferred leisure interests and assist in securing appropriate opportunities.

Young people enjoy homely accommodation. The home is well decorated, furnished and maintained to a good standard. Young people are positive about their surroundings and comment that the home is comfortable. The provider ensures there is a rolling programme of repair and decoration and this contributes to the building's homely atmosphere. Young people's bedrooms and the home's communal areas are appropriately equipped and furnished. Same gender sibling groups who prefer to share a bedroom are allowed to do so. The home has a well maintained garden to the rear of the building which young people make good use of.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are safe and say they feel safe while living at the home. They confirm, as do staff, that bullying occurs very infrequently and when it does, this is managed appropriately by staff. Young people share trusting relationships with staff, and this contributes to their feelings of safety and security. Staff have access to clear child protection procedures which have been shared with the host local authority. This was not the case at the last inspection. Staff receive formal training in child protection and safeguarding facilitated by local authorities. Most staff have recently participated in training focussed on child sexual exploitation and they demonstrate a good working knowledge of safe child protection practices. Safeguarding is routinely explored in staff meetings and this assists staff to effectively protect young people from harm or abuse. There have been no allegations made against staff since the last inspection.

Young people generally do not go missing from the home, but some are regularly absent without permission. Staff have access to clear policies and procedures to

manage these instances and good records are maintained. Staff and the local police routinely discuss with young people risks posed to their safety when they are absent from home in an effort to curb this behaviour. Staff also have access to useful tools to chart the whereabouts and activities of young people when they are absent. These recording tools however, are not consistently used and so staff miss opportunities to explore in a more meaningful way young people's experiences when they are absent without permission.

The service has clear rules and boundaries that address behavioural issues in the home. Staff have access to updated behaviour management policies and procedures to support their practice. Despite this however, not all young people's case files evidence written behaviour management plans. This is important to ensure staff are appropriately advised how to manage poor and challenging behaviour. Young people are very aware of the established boundaries and the consequence of sustained poor behaviour. In response to poor behaviour, staff counsel young people and where necessary impose sanctions. Staff's use of sanctions is consistent and proportionate and young people largely feel they are fairly imposed. Staff keep clear documentation when sanctions are used. Staff make use of incentives to encourage positive behaviour. This strategy is largely effective as poor and challenging behaviour is not a regular occurrence.

There have been no incidents of young people being restrained since the last inspection and staff are aware of required documentation in the event of staff using physical intervention. The staff group are scheduled to participate in restraint training next month.

The home has in place sound policies and procedures with regard to the safe vetting and selection of staff. Managers vet staff effectively and follow safe recruitment policies and procedures. All required staff vetting checks are well evidenced.

The home's premises are physically safe and appropriately secure.

Leadership and management

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

The leadership and management of the home are adequate. The home currently has no Registered Manager in place; the previous manager left the service a week prior to the inspection. The home's former deputy is now the acting manager and the provider is currently recruiting for a permanent manager. The service employs a consultant who since the last inspection has focussed on the revision of many of the home's policies and procedures.

The service has a detailed statement of purpose in place. This outlines the home's services, facilities and the manner in which the home functions. The children's guide is a useful summary of the home's services, appropriately written for young people.

The home's development plan is somewhat basic and lacks detail in outlining plans

for the continual improvement of the service.

The home employs a sufficient number of staff to ensure the needs of young people are met. Additional staff are made available to work in the home to increase the level of supervision required to keep young people safe. The core staff group are experienced and appropriately qualified. Newly recruited staff are in the process of completing required NVQ training. This is essential to ensure young people are provided with high quality care. The staff group have access to a range of training opportunities, facilitated both internally and via the host and neighbouring local authorities. In the last 12 months, staff have completed some basic training courses. The home's current training programme is not sufficiently challenging to significantly enhance the quality of care provided.

Staff support and supervision is regular and meaningful, and appraisals are completed annually. This to ensure that staff performances are effectively monitored and that individual skills and training needs are appropriately met.

The home's monitoring systems are adequate. Managers have introduced a number of new recording mechanisms to better monitor the operation of the home. This includes a new tracking system of the outcomes for young people. Regulation 33 visits are completed monthly and subsequent reports are appropriately detailed. Since the last inspection Regulation 34 quality of care reports have been completed. These review all areas of the home's function and operation in accordance with the regulations.

Managers of the service are responsible for the review of case file information. Despite this however, some records are incomplete or not consistently used. For example, this is the case for staff's use of the home's admissions checklist, some key work records, educational information and recording tools used to comment on young people's absences. Accurate and comprehensive documentation is essential to assess placement progress and capture the experiences of young people while in living at the home.

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.