

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Heather Chaplin
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Date of last inspection	30/10/2013
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This service is operated by an independent organisation. Children and young people using this service may have emotional or behavioural difficulties. The service is registered to provide residential care and accommodation for one child or young person.

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**.

This is the second full inspection for this home in the current inspection year. The full inspection in October 2013 resulted in a judgement of inadequate. Although one major shortfall remains, which impacts on the judgements in all areas, the home has made steady and satisfactory progress.

Outcomes for young people are generally good; they are happy in the home and feel consulted. In particular, outcomes have improved in terms of educational attendance and life chances, but this development is not yet fully embedded.

Young people receive good quality, individualised care and confirm that they have positive relationships with staff. Activities are particularly enjoyed, and contribute to raising young people's self-esteem and confidence. Despite an overall improvement in the quality of care and paperwork, there are still a small number of instances where young people's records have not been updated clearly. This could impact on the consistency of care.

Young people feel safe in this home. Safeguarding is generally effective, but there is a potentially serious issue with staff recruitment files. In addition, some young people's financial repayments remain excessive and have not been progressed creatively. This can lead to a situation where young people's repayments for damages feel never-ending.

The home's relatively new Registered Manager, supported by senior colleagues, has

made considerable efforts to improve management monitoring. For example, he has addressed inappropriate sanctions with staff and has tackled poor educational provision. This has had a positive impact on improving staff consistency of practice and young people's educational outcomes.

The home has, therefore, shown clear improvement. At the last inspection, six requirements were made, four of which have been fully met. One requirement has been partially met and one not met. Six out of the seven recommendations have been addressed.

In relation to the requirement about staff recruitment that has not been addressed, there is no evidence that young people have been exposed to immediate risk, so their safety and welfare has not yet been compromised. There is, however, potential risk to young people if recruitment practice does not improve. Two new requirements have been made as a result of this inspection.

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 (2001)	ensure that all staff employed have full and satisfactory information available in relation to all matters specified in Schedule 2 (Regulation 26 (3) (d))	28/02/2014
28 (2001)	ensure that a record in permanent form is maintained in respect of each child who is accommodated in a children's home, which includes the information, documents and records specified in Schedule 3 relating to that child and is kept up to date. In particular, ensure that changes to care plan strategies are recorded consistently and clearly and made known to staff (Regulation 28 (1))	28/02/2014
17 (2001)	ensure that there is no imposition of any financial penalty, other than the requirement for the payment of a reasonable sum, by way of reparation. In particular, this relates to financial reparations taking the whole of a young person's pocket money, with no opportunity to reduce the amount through non-financial means (Regulation 17 (2) (g))	28/02/2014
33 (2001)	interview with their consent and in private, such parents and relatives as appears necessary in order to form an opinion of the standard of care provided in the home. Supply a copy of the report to HMCI. (Regulation 33 (4) and (5))	28/02/2014

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **adequate**.

Young people confirm that they have made good progress since arrival in the home. Their unique needs are met very well, through tailored support and individual care.

Young people now enjoy good health. Some young people had specific issues with their health, which they have overcome. For example, some were receiving significant doses of medication on arrival, but have been able to discontinue this under medical supervision.

Since the last inspection, young people now have access to increased educational provision. They now attend education every day and although this development has only been in place for three weeks, they are making steady progress. Progress has not yet had sufficient time to become reliably established and consequently, educational attainment will take some time to improve. Young people confirm that they feel much happier now that they are attending education daily.

Young people say that they enjoy their activities; in particular, walking, dancing and spending time with the staff. Although they find it difficult to achieve full participation in community activities due to their complex needs, they are attending a local leisure centre for dance classes, with staff support. One particularly positive outcome for young people is that they have learned to swim very capably while living in the home, and are now undertaking life-saving training. This provides them with an enjoyable activity that keeps them fit, as well as helping to improve their personal safety and that of other people.

Young people benefit from phone contact with family members. Although contact is supervised in line with the local authority's care plan, it is handled sensitively and enables young people to keep in touch with relatives to maintain relationships and reinforce their identity.

Young people do not yet have formal independence plans, but have made good progress in acquiring life skills. For example, one young person is able to make travel plans and organise his own journeys, although a member of staff still goes with him to ensure he is safe. Young people confirm that they enjoy cooking meals and have some useful skills in this area.

Quality of care

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

Young people are looked after well and enjoy the staff's company. They confirm that they have good relationships with the staff and that they can offer their views about the running of the home. Parents and social workers are consulted annually; their most recent questionnaire responses are positive.

The home has an effective complaints procedure, which young people understand. They have been able to access this whenever they need to. There have been five complaints since the last inspection, all of which have been addressed transparently and effectively. Although at the last inspection, the home had not recognised an issue raised as a complaint, the Registered Manager has now increased his understanding in this area.

Young people have detailed care plans and effective placement information from the local authority. Staff follow young people's plans carefully to ensure that their unique individual needs are met. Staff have addressed some sensitive issues appropriately in order to support young people's development. Recently, the Registered Manager has begun to meet young people every week for a review of their care and progress. These adult-style meetings reflect young people's developing maturity and they find them beneficial.

Planning documentation is regularly updated and generally clear. One instance was found where there was no obvious update to a strategy which stated that a young person, for safety reasons, could not have access to a games console, laptop and mobile phone. This strategy was only in place for a week and was quickly revoked to reflect changing risk, but the revised strategy was not clearly recorded for staff to see easily. This could potentially lead to confusion and inconsistencies in the young people's care.

The home continues to provide a healthy environment for young people. They receive effective support from a variety of healthcare professionals and lead active lives. The home's arrangement with the local child and adolescent mental health service has recently ceased, so the manager is actively researching alternative sources of therapeutic support for young people, to ensure that their emotional needs are met. This means that at the moment, there is no therapeutic provision for some young people, but it is in hand, so no requirement has been made.

After the last inspection, the Registered Manager advocated strongly for young people's educational needs. This shows a commitment to challenging poor educational provision. Raising young people's aspirations and promoting their education gives them improved opportunities in their lives. The manager's intervention may have contributed to the recent increase in educational provision for young people.

The home provides a good and diverse range of activities. For example, young people and staff go rambling every weekend, go swimming, engage in voluntary work with animals and attend a BMX bike club. Staff have worked hard to encourage young people to engage in a variety of activities and try out new ventures to broaden their horizons.

The children's home is situated in a suburban area outside a medium-sized rural town. It is an attractive house with sufficient space, homely furnishings and modern facilities. The home is kept clean and tidy to make it a pleasant environment for

young people and staff.

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 and protected in this home. If they had any concerns, they would know how to raise these and how to obtain help. Young people do not go missing and so are not at risk from the associated dangers.

Good behaviour is promoted and the Registered Manager has recently reviewed sanctions to this effect. This has been done in order to respond to the requirements at the last inspection and also, to accommodate the young people's changing needs as they mature. For example, the young people are no longer sent to their rooms earlier than their usual bedtime, as this is less effective for older teenagers. Most sanctions are reasonable and there is evidence of management monitoring, which has resulted in previous, unreasonable sanctions being revoked.

Discussion took place during the inspection about one financial repayments, which involves the young person paying back the whole of their £4.50 per week pocket money to address the costs of some damage to the home. Although the young person frequently earns additional pocket money on top of their £4.50, and confirmed that this substantial amount per week in reparation was decided partly at their own request, this is excessive. The original substantial amount owing could have been reduced by more imaginative measures, such as offering a reduction if the young person showed particularly good behaviour.

There has been only one physical intervention since the last inspection. Young people confirmed that they are content with the way in which occasional restraints are carried out. The Registered Manager is monitoring all interventions and commenting when necessary, to ensure that these are conducted correctly and fairly.

There remain significant shortfalls in the quality of information in staff recruitment files. A senior manager attended the inspection and explained that any gaps in employment history are always explored in interview. However, this is not clearly evidenced on the interview notes. Some entries in the person's employment history had been recorded with whole years only, not months, so potentially, this could mean a substantial gap. There was no evidence on file of any clarification about gaps in employment history being sought from the member of staff. Discussion took place about how this could be evidenced in future.

In addition, there were not written references on one file. There was an emailed reference form which had not been signed or dated by the referee, so it could have been completed by anyone. There was evidence of verbal checks being carried out on this reference. There was no second written reference at all; only a verbal reference form on file for the second referee. This means that young people are working with staff who have not been subject to robust recruitment checks.

The home's environment is maintained safely, with risk assessments, regular fire safety checks, drills and alarm tests. Routine health and safety matters are managed well. This helps to ensure that young people live in a safe environment. The home has a lone working risk assessment in place, which could not be located at the last inspection.

Leadership and management

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

The home is now more effectively managed than at the last inspection. The Registered Manager is progressing towards his management qualification, which will help him to achieve effective oversight.

The home has addressed the majority of the previous inspection requirements in a relatively short period of time, which shows capacity to improve. The first requirement was that the home's managers were asked to manage a home with sufficient care, competence and skill. There is an action plan in place to address the shortfalls found at the last inspection and as part of this plan, an experienced manager from another home has been mentoring the Registered Manager to guide and support him. This has been very successful and has brought about improvements in paperwork and in the monitoring systems for the home.

The home was also required to ensure that young people's liberty is not restricted, in terms of their access to the kitchen. The Registered Manager explained that the home allows young people to access the kitchen and this is never denied. At times, in response to specific incidents of inappropriate behaviour, kitchen use is allowed only under staff supervision. Young people confirmed that this is the case. This requirement has been addressed.

A requirement was made in relation to complaints. The Registered Manager is now better able to identify a complaint and record it as required. This issue has been fully addressed.

The home was also required to ensure that all staff employed have full and satisfactory recruitment information available. This has not been addressed. The home has been advised that failure to comply with this important safeguarding measure at the interim inspection is likely to result in inadequate progress.

The home was required to ensure that information; documents and records for each child are maintained in the home and kept up to date. This has been partially addressed and evidence was seen that the information is usually updated. Some additional clarification is still required to avoid staff following out-of-date plans for young people. The requirement has been repeated.

The home was required to maintain a system for robustly monitoring the conduct of the home. This has improved significantly since the last inspection and this requirement has been met. Seven recommendations were made at the last

inspection. Six of these have been fully met, as follows.

The home ensures that the views of the child's family, social worker and independent reviewing officer (IRO) are sought regularly on the child's care, but some of these individuals had not responded. Responses have now been obtained. The home's programme of activities shows that staff encourage children to take appropriate risks as a normal part of growing up. Young people confirm that where any sanctions, disciplinary measures or restraint are used, they are encouraged to have their views recorded. The home's manager has done some good work with a young person's education provider to maximise achievement. There is a lone working risk assessment in place to reflect the fact that young people are on one-to-one staffing ratios. The Registered Manager's supervision records now show the start and finish times of these meetings.

The seventh recommendation was to ensure that all staff's work is consistent with the regulations and national minimum standards. The manager is still addressing this so it is not fully met. However, issues outstanding have identified through requirements made at this inspection, so the recommendation has not been repeated.

Regulation 33 visits are conducted monthly and all the reports were present in the home. Regulation 34 reporting requirements changed from six-monthly to three-monthly on the day of this inspection. A report is due to be completed and sent to Ofsted now, but the Registered Manager is aware of this.

Ofsted has not received a Regulation 33 report since September 2013. These reports are generally effective, but do not specify whether parents were consulted. A new requirement has been made.

The home's staff and manager are clear about the service provided. The home has provided stable and secure placements for three years to young people. This is a good achievement. The value of this degree of stability and security is clear from young people's growing maturity and confident responses to professionals. Leaders and managers are confident about how the home has made a positive difference to young people and describe significant improvements in their outcomes with warmth and pride.

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.