

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Pamela Nuckley
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This service provides integrated packages of care, therapy and education to a maximum of six children with reactive attachment 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 receive highly personalised, well-planned care, taking into account their individual needs. The home strongly promotes positive outcomes for all young people. The manager and staff team are particularly proactive and successful in engaging young people in the placement and developing strong attachments. As a result, young people make excellent progress in relation to their starting points across all aspects of their welfare and development. They receive comprehensive therapeutic support around all aspects of attachment, and in turn, strive to fulfil their individual potentials, both educationally and personally. Young people receive holistic support, and opportunities to experience new activities and learn new skills, enabling them to grow as individuals and develop their self-esteem and identity.

The high level of qualified and motivated staff, who are supported by a dynamic manager, is an obvious strength of the home and this is positively reflected in the care of young people. The staff are very committed and work hard to enable young people to reach their potential within education and ensure that young people's health needs are prioritised. The home has made excellent progress in ensuring that young people are fully aware of their background and continue to ensure that mementos and memories are captured for them in the future. There is a positive atmosphere in the home, where care arrangements and planning take into account the individual and diverse needs of young people. Young people feel safe and hold a very positive view of the service. They are able to reflect on how they have benefitted from their placement and support at this home.

The management team understand the strengths and areas of future development for the home. They use consultation with young people effectively and the manager

is proactive in continuing to develop all areas within the home. However, there are some areas for development identified within this report. Areas for development are: to ensure that all documents are signed off by the author, that staff understand how to store controlled medication and that they know the missing from home protocol and the identified reporting category's within it. Furthermore, staff need to ensure that all young people's privacy is respected.

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
34 (2001)	ensure the system for improving the quality of care provided in the children's home includes the signing of all documents by the relevant author. (Regulation 34 (1) (b))	30/09/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure that children's privacy is appropriately protected (NMS 3.7)
- ensure that all staff working within the home know and implement the local authority missing from home protocol (NMS 5.2)
- ensure that medicines which are kept in the home are stored safely. Specifically in relation to staff understanding the procedure and storing of controlled drugs. (NMS 6.13)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for children and young people are **outstanding**.

Young people benefit from individualised support which helps them grow in confidence. Young people confirm that they are fully consulted in all aspects of their care. The home actively acknowledges racial, religious, gender and other differences and encourages open discussion and learning on such issues. The home ensures that mementoes, memories and achievements are recorded and saved for young people so they have an understanding of their past and background for their future. As a result, young people are encouraged to develop a positive self-view.

Numerous professionals identify this service as being excellent with positive outcomes for young people. One states 'I have watched this young person flourish over time'. Another says 'it's lovely to see this young person engaging with staff and being himself and having fun. It is such a difference from when they were first placed'. All professionals said the key strength of this service is the holistic work undertaken with young people, including building attachments, developing identity, communication skills, and emotional resilience. They say young people who were initially unable to trust and sustain attachments, develop what are felt to be very good relationships with staff and significant others. They feel that these attachments have enabled young people to self-regulate behaviours, and enabled them to be actively involved in all areas of their care.

Young people enjoy a balanced diet and active lifestyles, which keeps them healthy. Young people access suitable medical services and receive additional support from therapeutic agencies. This means they receive personalised and age-appropriate healthcare. There is a good approach to promoting the physical, emotional, and psychological health of young people. Staff are actively involved in engaging with young people about a range of health-related issues, which results in consistent improvements to health and well-being. Each young person has a health care plan that includes all of the required information as part of their wider placement plan.

Young people enjoy opportunities to plan for individual or group activities and in the running of the home. Young people see the results of their ideas, which include their own choice of activity or decoration of rooms. All the young people in this home said that the range of activities offered was the best thing about this home. Young people reported that they attended cubs, scouts, football clubs, horse riding and ice skating as part of their chosen hobbies. They continued to say that also went to the park, cinema and for walks. One young person says 'we are never bored here, there is always something to do'. Another says 'its boss here, we do something everyday'. Some young people have just returned from a summer holiday in Wales. This was truly appreciated by all young people but especially one who had not been on holiday before. He said 'it was fab and I sang on the karaoke'. Young people also enjoy in-house games including the use of a computer, books, art and craft materials, consoles and DVD's. This means young people are actively and positively involved in a range of activities both in the home and out in the community. This gives them the opportunity to have new experiences, learn new skills and grow in confidence.

Young people are actively encouraged to attend educational provision and attendance is excellent. Several young people have proudly displayed their certificates that note their 100% attendance. One young person said 'the best thing about this home is that school is fun'. Young people say staff ensure that they are ready for school, that staff are always interested about their day and help with any homework set. As a result young people feel they are nurtured and supported by staff. This ensures that young people have the opportunity to make exceptional progress towards educational achievement from their starting point at the time of placement.

Young people are able to maintain constructive contact with families, friends and

other people who play a significant role in their lives. Any issues which may arise from this emotive area are handled sensitively and supportively by staff enabling young people to develop emotional resilience and knowledge and understanding of their background. Individual plans contain information regarding restrictions to contact and staff support young people before, during and after contact. As a result, young people are able to maintain constructive contact as deemed appropriate by the placing authority with families, friends and other people who play a significant role in their lives.

Some young people say that on occasions, although staff do knock on their bedroom door they do not wait to be invited in. Therefore, this impacts on the young person's feelings of privacy and mutual respect.

Young people in placement are well-presented and have appropriate clothing and belongings to meet their needs. They receive pocket money and have a bank account in which the home deposits monies for them. Young people's clothing and personal requisites are fully met.

Quality of care

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

An exceptional quality of care is provided to the young people living at this home. They benefit from a competent and motivated staff team who genuinely care about them. A social worker commented 'the staff at this home are really professional and I cannot fault the care that is given'. Young people build successful relationships with staff enabling them to feel safe and secure, and to achieve positive outcomes across all areas of their social and personal development. As a result, young people know they are valued as individuals and say, 'It's a good home; the staff listen to me and help me with things emotionally. Another young person says 'staff look after me like my mother should have'. Therefore, all young people identified the staff team as being one of the best features of this home.

Robust placement planning and assessment identifies young people's individual needs. Individualised care planning focuses interventions on attachment and behaviour. One-to-one therapy sessions with young people address areas such as aggression, trust, safety, and communication. Support for young people is creative and identified to meet individual placement needs such as education, leisure, and health care. Staff actively seek young people's views at both an individual and group level, and respond in a way that makes the young people believe that their opinions are valued.

Effective behaviour management strategies are in place in the home. Young people confirm that the rules of the home are fair, and that staff are consistent with boundary setting, and consequences are appropriate. The home uses positive reinforcement in the form of incentives for young people and they can receive extra monies or specific items.

Young people attend regular young people's meetings and have regular key worker sessions which enable young people to have their voices heard and influence the running of the home. The service has a complaint procedure which is known and understood by staff and young people. All complaints are fully investigated regardless of whether young people withdraw them. The home deals with all concerns in a formal way to ensure transparency and good practice. Young people say that they are confident that any complaint they may raise will be addressed. Young people were also confident in identifying other independent services that they could contact if they did not wish to use the home's procedure. One young person says 'the National Youth Advocacy Service visits us once a month, so we can talk to her if we wish'. This ensures that young people have their views heard.

Young people's needs and development are reviewed regularly in the light of their care and progress at the home. Staff, young people and family contribute effectively to a young person's review and this ensures that any decisions are implemented into the daily care plan. The report provides up-to-date information, through discussion, as to how young people's individual needs or any concerns are met. Their needs are reviewed regularly and young people confirm they are able to contribute to their review and planned care.

Young people's health needs are prioritised and young people have regular access to health services specific to their needs. Health promotion is a prominent feature at the home. The physical, emotional and mental health needs of each young person are identified on admission and comprehensively supported throughout their stay. For example, excellent partnership working with health professionals means the home provides holistic care for young people. Records of appointments with health professionals are clearly maintained ensuring the physical, emotional and mental health needs of young people are met. Medication is securely stored within the home and designated staff are trained to administer medication safely. Clear records are maintained for the administration of medication and staff are vigilant in checking medication dispensed, ensuring accurate and up-to-date records are maintained. However, not all staff are aware of how to store a controlled medication. This does not impact on young people presently as no young person is currently receiving a controlled drug but there is potential to do so in the future.

Young people enjoy healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs. They have opportunities to plan, shop and prepare meals. Young people are encouraged to eat meals at the table and share social occasions. Young people are supported to make their own snacks or drinks for themselves and others during the day promoting young people's independence.

Young people are able to pursue their particular interests, develop confidence in their skills and are supported by staff to engage in leisure activities. The home is set up to offer a range of fun, leisure and educational activities which are planned in advance with the inclusion of all the young people. The home provides young people with age-appropriate up-to-date books, literature and board games. The home has a computer which young people can access safely. Young people have access to transport provided by staff, which enables young people to access leisure activities in

the community and visit family or friends.

Young people's education is highly valued at this home. Staff ensure that young people are ready for their day, are interested in how their day went, support young people by assisting them with homework and by celebrating any achievement or progress made by young people. Staff liaise with schools and attend any meeting or significant events. Thus young people feel that they are fully supported within education.

Young people live in a home which provides sufficient space to meet their needs. The home is clean and has large secure gardens for young people to enjoy and have fun in. Young people have their own bedrooms, which they are able to personalise. Their bedrooms reflect their interests and contain meaningful posters, photographs and mementoes. The home has a very relaxed atmosphere.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The systems in place to promote the safety and welfare of young people are very good. Well-organised and clear individualised risk assessments and staff procedures help to keep young people safe, whilst enabling them to take appropriate and reasonable risks. This enables young people to develop confidence, decision-making and independence skills. Staff are clear about their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding young people's welfare and staff are encouraged to keep their knowledge up-to-date by attending appropriate training. This ensures that young people are protected from abuse. Child protection incidents at the home are dealt with appropriately and all professionals notified within appropriate timescales. The Local Area Designated Officer says that this home is diligent in sharing concerns, reporting responsibilities and initiating strategy meeting to keep young people safe. He continued to say 'the staff and manager of this home are excellent in ensuring the safety of young people in their care'.

Young people say that they feel safe and secure living at this home. Young people are at different stages of development and understanding of keeping themselves safe and of having an awareness of how their behaviour can significantly impact on others. Care staff are trained in methods of care and control and they respond positively to challenging behaviour. Restraint is only ever used as a last resort and staff and young people are both debriefed after the event to ensure that lessons are learnt from it. One social worker says, 'the home is excellent in identifying triggers and patterns in behaviour which has led to a reduction of this young person needing to be held. I also receive comprehensive reports on any incident.'

Young people say they can openly talk to their carers over their worries and concerns, and feel that the adults listen well and care about their welfare. The home has clear, well understood and effective risk management strategies in place, which recognise the needs of young people and provide suitable strategies to manage any associated risks. The staff group is skilled at recognising and managing risk taking

behaviour and consistently implement the agreed strategies to reduce risks to young people. Staff act as good role models for young people.

Some young people had high levels of being missing from care before being placed here. These have been reduced significantly. A social worker reported that this can be contributed to effective monitoring of the incidents and that the manager and staff team develop a clear understanding of the reasons why young people do go missing. Young people are supported to understand the risks associated with going missing through regular key working sessions and effective safe care plans. The home has also developed strong links with local police to promote the safety of young people in the local area. However, although the home has the local missing from home protocol in place, some staff are not aware of the detail needed such as classification categories. This means that police response times would be compromised if a situation occurred. But staff demonstrated that they fully understood and followed the home's procedure and that the welfare of the young person is their priority.

Young people are protected from bullying. Staff are vigilant with regard to relationships within the home and high supervision levels mean that there are limited opportunities for bullying or inappropriate relationships to develop. Young people discuss bullying with staff and any issues are addressed with individuals concerned.

The home provides a safe environment for young people to live in. Established systems and structures to maintain safe practices and fulfil health and safety requirements are routinely undertaken and maintained. Environmental risk assessments are in place informing the home of potential hazards in order to reduce risks. Staff undertake regular fire drills and evacuations, with all staff and young people routinely taking part in these tests. Although not fully inspected on this visit, the provider follows a robust recruitment and selection process ensuring that staff working with young people are suitable. Young people say that staffing commitment and stability is a positive aspect of their home that makes them feel safe.

Leadership and management

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

Young people enjoy the stability of an efficiently-run home with a stable, motivated and dedicated staff team and a dynamic manager. The manager is self-motivated, imaginative and forward thinking. She encourages staff to develop themselves and shares her knowledge with them. The manager has made significant improvements within the home and is constantly looking forward to develop all areas. She does this by consulting with young people, staff and other professionals. Therefore, staff and young people feel that they are truly involved in all aspects of the home. Staff feel they are knowledgeable, are supported in all areas and are rightly proud of their home. They feel this is then reflected in the care that they give to young people and in the excellent outcomes young people achieve.

Young people are guided through and know what services they can expect from the

home, how they will be cared for and who they are likely to share with. The home's Statement of Purpose covers all matters as outlined in Schedule 1 of The Children's Homes Regulations. The leadership provided by the home's manager and deputy manager ensure that all care and support services in this home appropriately fulfil the requirements of the provider's Statement of Purpose.

The home employs a high level of staffing. Any shortfalls in the rota are covered by existing staff doing extra hours or with a small number of company reserve staff. This ensures a level of consistent care to meet the needs of the young people. The home demonstrates good quality record keeping. Records contribute to an understanding of young people's lives and show the progress they have made. Young people routinely sign placement plans. This encourages and enables them to be part of their care planning and setting goals.

New staff receive induction training to the standard set by the Children's Workforce Development Council and they complete it in the appropriate timescale. All the established members of staff are qualified in the National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in care. Staff complete all mandatory training. They also receive additional therapeutic training which supports young people's individual needs. This ensures that young people are cared for by a suitable qualified staff team.

Staff are well supported within the home. Regular staff meetings include information on the development of the young people and have input from external providers. Staff receive one-to-one supervision and appraisals. As a result, staff say that they are supported in their role and are confident in their approach to care arrangements. These measures mean that young people experience a consistent approach that is personalised to meet their individual needs.

Feedback during this visit from several professionals confirms that there is effective communication with the home through regular updates, and well-written monthly reports.

The manager can clearly demonstrate the impact and value that living at the home has had on some young people's lives and how their life chances have improved over time. For example, this includes young people returning to mainstream school and young people moving on to foster parents.

The manager demonstrates excellent awareness of the development needs of the service and there is strong drive to improve care practices throughout. Quality assurance systems, in terms of monitoring under Regulation 34 by the manager and visits in line with Regulation 33 on behalf of the provider organisation, are good. However, not all paperwork is signed by the author. These errors were not picked up by the monitoring systems and therefore impacts on the robustness of these systems.

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* (March 2011) and the evaluation schedule for children's homes.