

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Rossella Volpi
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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.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service that exceeds minimum requirements

Satisfactory: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is registered to accommodate up to five children or young people. The Statement of Purpose specifies an age range of eight to 17 years. The children or young people may have complex needs including emotional and behavioural difficulties. The provider is an organisation and a limited company, conducting a number of children's homes.

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **good**.

Young people have confidence in staff's ability to support them well and in management's capacity to conduct the home in their best interests.

Young people feel that they are consulted and that their views and wishes are taken into account. They feel able to raise concerns, confident that staff will try to put things right. They gave examples to demonstrate how recent complaints were taken seriously and acted upon promptly.

Young people receive good quality care, by a team of committed and stable staff and this has been effective in supporting them in making good progress overall. Health needs are identified and appropriately supported. Young people have been engaged in educational activities and in leisure pursuits that reflect their interests. They benefit from appropriate contact with families.

Areas for improvement relate to certain aspects of managerial monitoring and controlling and the keeping of records. It is also an issue that the home has been run for a protracted period without the provider putting forward a manager to be assessed as suitable for registration.

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
17B (2001)	ensure that appropriate records are kept of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline (Regulation 17B (3) (4))	01/09/2011

7 (2001)	give notice to HMCI of the name of the person appointed to manage the children's home and of the date on which the appointment is to take effect (Regulation 7)	01/11/2011
34 (2001)	establish and maintain a system for reviewing the quality of care provided in the children's home. Specifically ensure that the review reports on the quality of care and provides for consultation with children accommodated, their parents and placing authorities. (Regulation 34)	01/12/2011

Recommendations

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

- review the internal care plan records to ensure that they demonstrate the effectiveness of the work done to support children's individual needs (NMS 2)
- ensure that there is a written record kept, when a child goes missing, giving clear evidence of action taken by staff to minimise risk, the circumstances of the child's return, any reason given by the child for running away and any action taken in the light of those reasons. (NMS 5.10)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are benefiting from their placement at the home and they are well supported by staff in achieving good results. Young people's health is promoted well and good attention is given to proper identification of any health concerns. When necessary, young people access the routine and specialist services to ensure that they stay healthy. Young people take responsibility for their own health, acting on the advice from staff. For example, some young people have reflected on the consequences of substance misuse and have made efforts to change such habits. Some follow healthier lifestyles, than they did before arrival to the home and make more considered choices regarding the food that they eat. All enjoy varied meals that meet their cultural and individual preferences and have opportunities to plan, shop for and prepare meals.

Young people are making progress with their education. They have been receiving regular tutoring and are engaging well in educational activities, some for the first time in many months. Young people spoke with enthusiasm about the projects they were involved in, the matters they were researching or the creative work they had been pursuing. This engagement has also been effective in giving some young people an incentive to apply for courses or increase their work skills. This included, for example, work experience and courses leading to specific qualifications.

Young people spoke with pride about their achievements and with some confidence

about their plans for the future. The progress made towards identifiable positive outcomes being a contributing factor in young people developing a more positive self view and trust in their skills.

Young people make friendships inside and outside the home. They are well assisted to engage in a range of external leisure activities that reflect their interests and aid their engagement with the wider community.

Young people benefit from appropriate contact with family, friends and other people who are significant in their life. Staff support young people well in this, involve families in the care plans and work with them in young people's best interests. Staff recognise the importance of this work in relation to maintaining young people's culture and feeling of belonging.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from good relationships with staff. They spoke warmly of their carers and used words such as 'good', 'lovely', 'respectful', 'fair' and 'helpful' to describe them. They said that the manager is 'there for us' and that they can go to her with any concerns because she 'really listens and puts things right'.

Young people are satisfied with the means of consultation. They participate in their own reviews; they are invited to express their views in residents' meetings, in one-to-one sessions with their main carer and, informally, in their daily interactions with the staff. Young people gave examples on how their wishes and feelings have been acted upon and have had an influence on the way care is delivered. For example, on their care plans; contact arrangements; leisure activities; decorations in the home; holidays and regarding a range of daily living choices. They said that when staff cannot act upon their requests, they explain the reasons why and are open to reasonable negotiations.

Young people know how to complain both to staff and to external agencies. The reference to this in the children's guide puts emphasis on young people having to raise the complaint in writing. This has the potential to deter some young people from complaining.

Staff ensure that cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds are properly considered, when planning how best to meet individual needs; but this is not always clearly recorded.

There are a number of care plans, for each young person. These are comprehensive in the range of areas to be covered; but are vague, at times, in relation to how the care has actually been delivered. For example, one care plan dated ten weeks after a young person's arrival, referred to what was intended, with no reference to what had been done. Additionally, there is not always a clear correlation between the different care plans, showing progress and changes from a previous plan to the more recent

one.

There are a range of risk assessments for each young person, and a behaviour management plan, which are integral parts of the care plans. These are regularly reviewed. However, there is no clear evidence that all reviews consider the effectiveness of the actions taken; for example, to minimise risks identified in the previous plans. Furthermore, the plans do not show how some issues, identified as potential problems, would be addressed. This has the potential to impinge negatively on the quality of care if not addressed. The reviews do not lend themselves to clear identification of the required changes, to ensure that care is effective and risks are minimised. However, staff demonstrate a good understanding of the specific needs of young people and work collaboratively with the placing authorities to meet them. Placing authorities acknowledge that young people are doing well in this placement. Young people gave a range of examples that illustrated how, in their views, the care they have been receiving has been consistent with their expectations. Consequently, young people usually have their needs assessed effectively and regularly reviewed, despite the shortfalls in recording.

Young people like their bedrooms and the communal areas. They commented that having only one bathroom is an issue, when all have to get ready at the same time. However, they said, this is partly mitigated by staff letting them use the staff's shower room.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people feel safe at the home. They say that staff have helped them to settle in well and make them feel welcomed and relaxed. They are aware of the rules of behaviour expected from them and from staff. They say that rules are fair and they can see the reasons for their implementation. Young people benefit from consistent boundaries within the home. Staff employ a range of strategies, including sanctions, rewards and incentives, to promote positive behaviour. Young people are aware that certain behaviours are unacceptable and they may be sanctioned as a consequence. They consider that sanctions are generally appropriate and occasionally they are effective. They consider, though, that more effective means are the good relationships with staff and the opportunity they have for discussion.

Staff are trained in physical intervention and de-escalation techniques. Restraint is rarely used. There have been some recent incidents where physical intervention was applied in relation to a placement that was then deemed unsuitable. A written record is kept of sanctions and of restraints' incidents, in a dedicated volume for each and also the information is kept elsewhere, in different forms. The records in the dedicated books do not always fulfil their purpose. In particular, they are not useful in demonstrating that staff always apply measures of control that are consistent with the law and good practice guidelines. Additionally, they are not useful as an effective tool for managerial review. For example, the entries are not always legible and young people's comments often are not recorded. The records of sanctions do not

give always a clear indication of why that sanction was deemed necessary or of the effectiveness and consequences of the use of the measure.

Young people are protected in the home by staff who are clear about safeguarding procedures. Staff are trained so that they are aware of their responsibilities if they are alerted to allegations or suspicions of abuse.

Staff recognise the potential for bullying to occur; they seek to intervene early wherever problems emerge and report that bullying levels are low. Young people confirmed this and gave examples that demonstrated staff's prompt and effective intervention to counter bullying. Young people appreciated also staff intervening to prevent a fight and possible injury to another young person.

There has been success in reducing the incidence of young people running away. Staff are aware of what to do if a young person goes missing and liaise with statutory agencies to ensure robust action is taken to minimise risks. Management has taken some action to comply with a previous requirement regarding the records maintained when young people are away from the home without permission. However, there continues to be no main record summarising all the relevant information, including the actions taken and by whom, and the information received. This has potential for important information to be overlooked; also the system is not conducive to the identification of patterns. Furthermore, although there are a number of different logs and documents, each with some of the necessary information, there is no record of some important matters. For example, there is no record of the comments made by the young person on return or of debriefing sessions.

Leadership and management

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

Young people benefit from a stable and committed staff team. Staff have been successful in supporting them well towards achieving positive results. These are consistent with the expectations of the placements and take into account the ethnic, cultural and individual needs of the young people.

Staff are well guided and supervised to ensure that they feel supported and competent for their tasks. They report that the training provided is of good quality and meets their needs in equipping them to deliver good and safe care.

The Statement of Purpose emphasises the therapeutic approach of this home as a specialist service and the staff team is supported by a psychologist. However, the training courses that staff have completed have not included significant specialist training. Staff at the home, overall, do not have formal qualifications reflecting such specialist approach.

Young people are guided through and know what services to expect from the home and how they will be cared for. This is supported by the information in the young

people's guide, which is discussed with each young person; but not all have received the updated guide. Some minor omissions in the guide are being addressed. An omission in the Statement of Purpose, regarding one of the services provided, is also being rectified.

Staff like working at the home and say that the recent changes resulted in much improved team morale. Staff consider that particular strengths of the way they are managed are the happy working environment and that they can discuss any concerns or problems. Some representative comments are: 'Great manager'; 'I can be open and honest in supervision'; 'We get clear messages'; 'She listens and is interested in our work'.

However, the day to day management arrangements are not formalised because the provider has failed to put forward a manager for registration, for what is now a protracted period.

Staffing levels in the home and whether waking night staff are required vary; they are considered by management in relation to the needs of the young people and agreed with the placing authorities.

Young people's welfare is monitored regularly by management, through a variety of means, which contribute to improving the quality of the service. For example, there are visits on behalf of senior management, to ensure that the service is operating according to their expectations. Internal monitoring is carried out regularly by the home's manager.

There are some shortfalls. In particular, there is no report to evidence that an appraisal of the quality of care is completed, consistently with the expectations of the relevant regulation. Additionally, the monitoring of a variety of records, including care planning, risk assessments and those relating to disciplinary measures, has not been fully effective. The shortfalls in such records are outlined above in the report.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.