

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Rachel Ruth Britten
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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 offers services and care for two young people from 10 to 17 years of age with emotional or behavioural difficulties. It is part of a large organisation operating a number of children's homes.

The home is a family house located within an established residential community, close to recreational, educational and health facilities. The communal areas of the home include a lounge/diner, kitchen, bathroom and a garden. Each young person has their own bedroom. There is a staff sleeping-in room which is also the staff office.

Two young people currently live in the home and one was present during the inspection.

Overall effectiveness

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

The home is successfully providing personalised and well planned care for each young person. Very positive outcomes are being achieved for young people who have been in residence for over 12 months. These young people say that the quality of care in the home is good and they feel safe and well supported here. They enjoy very good relationships with staff and are being given increasing opportunities and encouragement to participate, organise and develop as individuals. This includes building sustainable family and social relationships as well as making a positive contribution to the home, the organisation, and the voice of young people in the social care system.

The home's management and staff work hard to provide stability for young people who are new in placement. They proactively seek appropriate and considered solutions if placements are not proving able to keep young people safe. There are some small shortfalls in the quality and organisation of recording. Staff do not always record with enough detail, insight and understanding. This slightly holds back the effectiveness and consistency of staff practice and inter-agency working. The impact of this is small and the quality of provision remains good in all areas.

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
29 (2001)	ensure that the records specified in Schedule 4 are kept up to date, with particular respect to staff injuries and accidents. (Regulation 29(1))	30/07/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure that staff follow the full procedure when restraints occur, including offering medical support to the young person and encouraging young people to have their views recorded in the home's records (NMS 3.16 and 3.18)
- ensure that good hygiene is maintained in the bathroom to minimise the risk of infection, whilst maintaining the comfortable and homely environment (NMS 10.3)
- provide in the children's guide, details of how young people contact their independent reviewing officer and Ofsted's correct phone number if they wish to raise a concern with inspectors (NMS 13.5)
- ensure that information recorded about young people is clear and helpful to them and encourage young people to read and add personal statements to their files. (NMS 22.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Overall, young people are developing a positive self-view and increasing emotional resilience. This includes significant and positive developments in understanding their background. The atmosphere created in the home by the consistent commitment of the staff team, effectively supports young people to gain good confidence in their skills and abilities. For example, some young people are increasingly able and confident with cooking, laundry and budgeting.

The physical health of young people settled in placement is improving. They are gaining an increasingly appropriate understanding of their own health and wellbeing. They are able to take responsibility for safely keeping and taking their own medication. Some of them are trying to give up smoking. They are taking some exercise at the local gym as well as walking more. Young people are sometimes making improved choices to buy less junk food and eat more nutritious meals and snacks. Young people's emotional and psychological health is improving as they are nurtured, listened to, and helped to gain insight into the impact of their ways upon others. The opportunities to gain health benefits in placement are, however, necessarily limited for some young people who are frequently missing from home. These young people have been assisted to attend medical appointments and to take their prescribed medication, but are not consistently doing so because they are absent from the home.

Some young people are attending education and are achieving exceptionally well. They are extremely settled in the home and have benefitted from very good support as they study and undertake exams at mainstream school. They are making plans for further education and careers as well as actively seeking summer holiday work. Other young people are very frequently missing from home and have not been attending education for some weeks as a result.

Young people who are settled in placement are benefitting very much from extended and planned increased contact with their family members. They are also enjoying some positive friendships both through school and other care homes in the area which share the same manager. These young people's confidence and social skills are improving as a result. However, young people who have very recently been placed are pursuing contact with family members and others in an inappropriate way which places them at risk. Staff and managers are working diligently with placing authorities and the police to find ways of balancing these young people's safeguarding and contact needs in a planned, realistic way and are trying to help them to engage in this.

Young people who are settled in placement are being well prepared for a successful transition to independence and adult life. They trust their key carers and are very confident to express their views and communicate clearly with staff and other adults involved in their pathway plan. These young people receive consistently high quality emotional and practical support when changes or obstacles to plans arise. They are very secure in the knowledge that relationships with key people involved in their care will be ongoing and supportive.

Quality of care

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

Staff and managers in the home make very positive and constructive relationships with young people. They work together well as a team and are consistent and caring. Young people say that they get plenty of individual time with their key workers and feel very well supported. They feel that their views, wishes and feelings are actively sought and that they influence the running of the home. They take part regularly in meetings and there are conversations and discussions throughout each day to help young people express themselves.

Young people know how and where to complain, and receive sound support from staff to help them understand why and when it is not possible to act on their wishes. The young people's guide contains most useful information about their rights and where to get support and advice. However, the guide does not currently give details of their independent reviewing officer. Some young people understand their rights to independent help and advice particularly well. They are very computer literate and are able to articulate and represent other young people both in the home and in wider forums for young people in the care system.

Young people are cared for in line with their individual placement plans and some young people read their 'tracker' documents and sign up to them. Key workers record progress and events and tailor their work with young people to suit and address each one's individual personal identity and cultural needs. Some records are being reviewed to make them more suitable for the young people that they about. However, young people's files and records about incidents and events are still not used very proactively alongside young people because most of them are not in a user-friendly format for young people or staff to use to best effect. Young people are not engaged in regularly reviewing the records kept about them or adding their personal comments. Some records are therefore underused as tools to help young people to understand their situations well and learn from events and incidents which happen.

Nevertheless, staff are committed to supporting all young people to achieve good outcomes. There is particular success in supporting young people to improve their family and social contacts, their social skills, and their progress towards higher education and independent living. Linked to this is a good emphasis upon social awareness and citizenship. For example, young people are encouraged to learn about the foods, religions and customs of various nationalities at cultural celebration evenings with staff and other young people from other nearby homes run by the organisation. Young people are also take part in charitable work and fund raising for good causes locally, supported and facilitated by staff.

The home is appropriately located in a residential area with local facilities. It is in generally good condition and well decorated and furnished. Young people have recently ordered a better desk for study and can lock their rooms. Staff and young people take responsibility together for keeping the house and garden clean and tidy. There are photos and pictures around the home which reflect young people's own choices and activities. Standards are high overall and there is a homely, domestic atmosphere. However, there are discarded cigarette ends in the garden and good

hygiene is slightly compromised in the bathroom by the number of toothbrushes and opened toothpastes left around.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people feel safe in the setting and mostly behave well. Staffing levels are good and each young person receives consistent one to one care from staff who are long standing and suitably vetted. Young people are kept safe because staff supervise them appropriately and have a sound knowledge of child protection procedures. Visitors' identification is checked and their details logged promptly on arrival. Exit doors and gates are locked to prevent unauthorised entry, but residents are able to exit the building freely. Windows upstairs are restricted to minimise the risk of injury which is likely if young people climb out through them.

Incidents involving unwanted behaviour have been few since the last inspection. Sanctions and restraints are few. However, there have recently been incidents where staff have received injuries and an occasion where restraint was used. Records of restraints do not make clear whether, and how, young people are offered their right to medical attention when restraints occur. Young people's views and comments following restraints have not been accurately recorded, nor injuries and accidents to staff. These shortfalls in recording limit the usefulness of the records to staff working with young people and in keeping both adults and young people secure. Nevertheless, discussion and observations show that the care practice itself is good overall.

Young people who are settled in placement do not go missing. Young people recently placed are very frequently going missing. Staff and managers are working diligently alongside placing authorities and the police, including railway police, to look for young people when they go missing. Managers and staff take prompt action to review plans and arrangements for keeping these young people safe and meeting their needs. Staff respond positively to young people when they return and work hard to protect them, supervise them and provide reasons for them to stay. Staff balance the needs of each resident and work to minimise the disruption to young people caused when staff are needed to fetch young people who have been found.

Leadership and management

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

The home is managed well. Managers understand the strengths and weaknesses of the service and foster the place of the home in the community. They are very accessible to their staff and support them well, offering regular and effective supervision. This enables staff to cope well with the challenges of their work and deliver good quality care to young people. Long standing staff are suitably qualified and access refresher training relevant to their work.

Managers monitor the quality of care effectively. They keep the statement of purpose and the children's guide under review and state that they will immediately make amendments to the staffing details in these documents. Managers take account of the comments from the monthly Regulation 33 visitor and spend regular time with young people to consult them about their welfare.

Managers have plans in place for the ongoing development of the home, including: upgrading the furnishings and decoration of the home and amending and adapting some of the key-working resources and records alongside young people, so that they are more engaging for young people to use. Managers engage positively in the inspection process and are determined to maintain high standards through gaining a thorough understanding of changes and themes in the new national minimum standards.

Managers ensure that staff keep records up to date and store them securely. Managers also understand the requirements to log the details, actions and outcomes of significant events and notify them to the relevant authorities. However, some staff are less confident about what is to be notified, the categories of notification, and the importance of making clear records of all the actions taken and their outcomes. As a result, some significant events records do not contain a very clear picture of the whole event and all the action that was taken. This shortfall has not adversely affected the care of young people, but it means that the organisation and efficiency of the setting is good rather than outstanding.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.