

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Mandy Williams
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is owned and operated by a private organisation. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four children and young people. The children and young people may have emotional and behavioural difficulties, including attachment problems.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service 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**.

This is a good home where children enjoy living and feel safe and secure. Children have made good progress since moving to live here, both socially and educationally, despite their difficult past experiences. There are extremely positive relationships between staff and children and a real commitment from staff to aim for positive outcomes for them. One young person commented, 'staff at X look after me better than anywhere else I have lived'. This assists in the development of attachments, which in turn helps children cope better with their presenting problems, as they become more confident in the responses of those around them.

The staff team is largely stable, providing a good deal of continuity for the children placed. The staff receive regular, updated training, support and supervision. However, a consistent named individual does not always undertake supervision.

Children and young people benefit from individualised placement plans. These are clear, detailed and serve to ensure that all concerned are working with the children and young people in a consistent manner. The home works well with other professionals and has good communication systems in place to keep all those involved informed about any updated information.

The home is managed effectively. The Registered Manager has a good oversight of the issues in the home and places a strong emphasis on providing a high standard of care. All placements in the home are planned and care is given to ensure the home is the most appropriate placement. The impact on children and young people already resident in the home is also carefully considered.

There is a good standard of record keeping in the home. However, while the home maintains detailed records of any physical restraints implemented, only a summary of this is recorded in the home's bound volume. Consequently, this does not contain all the information required and keeping two records could result in inaccuracies in recording. Similarly, on an isolated occasion, the staff member concerned has not signed the duplicate record.

Both the external and internal monitoring of the home is undertaken routinely. However, the timescales around the signing off and completion of any identified actions is not always clear.

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 within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, in particular restraint, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose that includes all the information listed in paragraph 3. (Regulation 17B(3))	08/06/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure that staff are properly managed, supported and understand to whom they are accountable; particularly that they have a named supervisor who undertakes these tasks on a regular basis (NMS 19.2)
- ensure that the registered person takes action to address any issues of concern that visits under Regulation 33 identify; in particular that any actions taken by the registered person are recorded, dated and signed off on completion in the homes records. (NMS 21.9)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Children and young people living in the home enjoy good outcomes in terms of their health, education and emotional well-being. They have often experienced a difficult

start in life and have complex needs, including attachment difficulties. Staff work hard to provide a consistency of approach so that children and young people can become confident in the response that they will receive. This will help them learn to trust adults and develop a greater level of emotional resilience. Staff receive a monthly consultation with the organisation's therapist, so that they are best equipped to cope with the individual needs of each young person.

Children and young people have access to a range of health care professionals and have detailed health care plans. The home is proactive in ensuring that young people have their health needs met. Some have benefitted from staff support through surgical treatment and are now stabilised on correct levels of medication. Young people are encouraged to be involved in such decisions and are helped to make informed choices.

Children and young people enjoy a healthy and nutritious diet. Some young people in the home are eager and enthusiastic about taking on the role of meal planning with some guidance from staff. They have consulted with the other young people and been successful in drawing up their own menu for the week ahead. This demonstrates that they have an understanding of nutrition and involved consultation and negotiation. Such skills will also assist them in preparing for independent living in the future. Staff are also willing to alter menus accordingly. They may cook a separate meal for a young person if required; for example, to ensure that the young person has a nutritious meal before they go out to meet friends in the evening.

All children and young people currently attend the organisation's school. Attendance is excellent and all are making good progress with regard to their educational achievement. It is hoped that some will be able to progress to attending mainstream schools. There is good communication between the home and school and education plans are regularly reviewed. This ensures that young people's educational progress is monitored and their needs met.

The organisation has access to a therapeutic team, whose members work with children and young people on an individual basis as well as offering advice and support to those caring for them. They are particularly skilled in working with children and young people with attachment difficulties and helping them develop an understanding about their past experiences. Social workers report that they are confident that the home provides a 'therapeutic experience' for young people.

Due to their young age, children and young people receive gentle preparation in relation to independence skills. They are encouraged to undertake small tasks around the home, such as clearing the table, making their bed or doing some cooking. They are slowly given more independent choices and free time in order to prepare them for making their own decisions and managing independently in the future. This provides a sense of achievement. The praise they receive from staff assists in the development of their self-esteem.

Children and young people are supported to maintain contact with those important to them, such as family and friends. Contact is clearly defined in young people's

placement plans. Some young people have their own mobile telephones if appropriate and all young people have access to the house telephone. Some young people have formed friendships in the local community and staff are keen to facilitate these. Young people are able to invite their friends to the home and staff will involve them in activities they are undertaking. This is particularly significant for some young people who have struggled to maintain friendships in the past and where they are not attending school in the locality.

Quality of care

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

Children and young people enjoy positive relationships with staff and they are thriving in this nurturing environment. Staff act as positive role models. They set clear and consistent boundaries about appropriate behaviour and are skilled at diffusing potentially volatile situations. They demonstrate sensitivity to the needs of the children and young people and adapt their approaches accordingly. They are eager to improve the life chances for the children and young people in their care and to providing fun learning opportunities for them. Children and young people enjoy spending time with staff and feel confident with them.

Staff actively seek children and young people's views, which in turn influence the running of the home. Young people's meetings are held weekly and consultation includes subjects such as planning holidays, meals and activities. The home also undertakes regular surveys with young people about their experiences in the home. The organisation is keen to promote the participation of children and young people in its development and one young person in the home is a representative on the children's forum. This entails canvassing the views of the other children and young people and formulating three issues to take forward to a larger group. This assists young people to develop skills in communication and negotiation, which will remain with them into adulthood. It also serves to reinforce to them that their opinions do matter and are valued.

Staff at the home are also particularly good at welcoming new children and young people moving into the home. In addition to receiving the children's guide to the home, children and young people have a photo album with pictures of the house, gardens, the locality, staff and children in the home. This is given to a child or young person before they move in.

Children and young people already resident in the home are also prepared in advance for a new arrival. They help to create a warm and welcoming atmosphere by preparing 'welcome' posters, or a small gift for the new young person. This reinforces to children and young people that moves of placement are significant events; they are likely to recall this warm welcome positively.

Children and young people benefit from individualised placement plans that clearly outline their needs and the arrangements for meeting these on a daily basis. These

are regularly reviewed and take into account the views of the children and young people, as well as other professionals working with them. Staff demonstrate that they are familiar with these and are thus able to provide a consistency of approach. This is essential for children and young people with attachment difficulties, as they need to be able to trust those caring for them to respond in a predictable way.

Staff have an extremely good understanding of the children and young people in the home and are able to recognise triggers for negative behaviours. Each child or young person has a detailed behaviour management plan that includes details of specific behaviours and how these should be managed. The plan identifies targets, which young people can aim to meet. If they are able to meet these targets, which may be small initially, they achieve a reward which they have chosen in advance. This means that young people are clear about their targets and benefit from a positive behaviour management strategy which focuses on success rather than failure.

Children and young people know how to complain. Information is available to them in the children's guide and also on the notice board in the home. The home also has an arrangement with the local advocacy service and a representative visits the home for tea on a monthly basis. The children and young people are familiar with the advocate and have in the past asked her to help them sort out issues, for example, contact concerns. There have been no complaints by young people since the last inspection.

Children and young people benefit from a daily routine and a weekly planner that outlines all activities and appointments for the week ahead. Staff encourage young people to take part in a range of recreational activities in the community. Such activities include attending youth club, a 'beavers' group, swimming, a climbing wall and drama group. Activities with staff are also encouraged such as art and crafts, a trip to the park, baking or the cinema. One young person commented, 'I like living here, I do activities that I like and I have fun'.

The home celebrates young people's individual heritages and staff engage in a range of activities to increase the knowledge of children and young people about the world. Staff have obtained information and items of memorabilia about specific cultures that reflect the heritage of young people. They also celebrate specific events such as saints' days and religious festivals for different religions. Information is displayed around the house and a special meal may be shared. This helps young people develop an understanding of the nation's diversity and fosters an opportunity for further discussion.

The home is located in a quiet residential area and is furnished to a good standard. It is homely and welcoming, as well as clean and well maintained. The Registered Manager has plans to update the decoration in some parts of the home. Children and young people are able to personalise their bedrooms and are involved in choosing the colour schemes. This helps them develop a sense of belonging to the home.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children and young people are well cared for and say they feel safe living in the home. Staff undertake regular refresher training in safeguarding so that they are able to respond appropriately if they have any safeguarding concerns. The organisation has a bullying policy, although young people confirm that bullying is not an issue in the home.

The home takes appropriate action should young people go missing from home. The home's policies are in line with locally agreed protocols and the Registered Manager attends quarterly meetings with the local missing from home co-ordinator. The number of incidents remains high for some young people in the home. The Registered Manager has a good system to track and monitor these and is usually able to identify the triggers for any peaks that do occur. This is helpful, as the staff can then identify when such events are likely to take place and put systems in place to try to avoid these in the future. Good records are kept of these occurrences and Young people are welcomed back to the home. They are given the opportunity to speak to an independent advocate after their return.

Children and young people benefit from individualised risk assessments which are reviewed regularly. These are formulated to cover a number of issues, such as violent behaviour, risk-taking behaviours, self-harming, internet and phone communication. This ensures that children and young people are supported appropriately and are not put in unnecessarily risky situations.

Staff are regularly trained in behaviour management. The home has unfortunately needed to implement restraints on a regular basis in order to protect those that they are caring for. The home maintains a bound volume for the recording of such incidents. However, this does not currently include all the regulatory requirements. This information is recorded elsewhere in the home but requires cross-referencing. This has the potential for inconsistencies and information being lost. For example, on one occasion the duplicate record in the bound restraint volume had not been signed by the staff member concerned.

The home's ethos is to reward positive behaviour. Rewards given to children and young people significantly outweigh the number of sanctions imposed in the home. Young people receive rewards for achieving their goals identified in their behaviour management plans, for helping others and for not getting involved with other young people when negative behaviours are displayed.

Any sanctions given relate to the incident for which they were imposed and are used by the home as a means of assisting young people to understand that there are implications to their actions. For example, damage to the games console resulted in not being allowed to play on the machine for a day. Not listening to staff at the swimming pool resulted in missing the next swimming trip. These are recorded appropriately in a volume designed for this purpose and young people have the opportunity to comment. Comments include, 'I am sorry' and 'I will try to listen in future'.

Staff recruitment processes in the organisation ensure that employees are suitably vetted prior to commencing work with children and young people. Visitors to the home are required to sign in the visitor's book and receive appropriate supervision while on the premises. This supports the view that the home takes steps to protect children and young people from those who may pose them harm.

Children and young people live in physically safe environment, as regular safety checks are undertaken. Regular fire drills take place so that young people are familiar with the process of evacuation should the need arise. Visitors to the home are also informed about the emergency procedures.

Leadership and management

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

Children and young people live in a home that is well organised and effectively managed. The home meets the aims and objectives of its statement of purpose, which is routinely reviewed. Children and young people receive an attractive and user-friendly children's guide prior to their admission. This outlines what care they should expect to receive in the home and how to access other services such as their social worker, the independent reviewing officer, or an advocate, should they require one.

The Registered Manager is suitably experienced and committed to driving forward improvements in the home. There were no requirements or recommendations identified from the last inspection. Both the external and internal monitoring of the home is undertaken thoroughly. The reports produced serve to highlight any shortfalls in service provision and tasks that require completion. However, it is not always clear in the home's records when identified tasks were completed or when tasks have been deferred and reasons for this.

The organisation has recently introduced a system for monitoring in graph format a number of issues for young people, such as physical interventions and incidents of missing from home. This is helpful as it provides a clear picture of the progress that the young person is making. The Registered Manager displays a clear understanding of the trends for each of the young people and is able to identify reasons for the peaks and troughs in behaviour.

The home is well resourced in relation to staff numbers. The staff team is largely stable and all staff members say their strength is 'working well as a team and really wanting the best outcomes for our children'. The staff know each other well and this helps to provide consistent messages and responses to the young people they are caring for. The staff team are good at supporting each other in challenging times and receive regular supervision and appraisals. However, they do not have a consistent named supervisor, as this role is shared between the senior staff in the home. This

could lead to confusion, differing messages and does not assist in the development of a trusting supervisory relationship.

The organisation is committed to providing training opportunities for staff to assist them in meeting the needs of the children and young people that they are caring for. The Registered Manager utilises a training matrix so that they are able to address training requirements as they become due. New staff undertake an induction programme which includes mandatory training elements. Staff also display confidence in training being identified for them if they were struggling with a particular issue. This ensures that young people are cared for by staff that have the necessary skills to meet their presenting needs.

Records are appropriately maintained and kept securely in the home. Staff are committed to keeping detailed records of their work that includes young people's views. These contribute to an understanding of the child's life and ensure that decisions and future planning are based on sound information.

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.