

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Merryl Wahogo
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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.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is one of two homes run by the organisation. The home offers residential placements for up to six children, male or female, who are between the ages of eight and 16 years. The home specialises in providing therapeutic care for children who have suffered trauma in their lives, such as physical, sexual or emotional abuse, or neglect, and display a variety of behavioural problems.

The home is a large two storey detached building in a residential area which is close to local shops and other amenities.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

This was the key unannounced inspection covering all outcome areas. Every outcome area is either judged as outstanding in itself or good with outstanding features. The particular strength of this home lies in the therapeutic support provided for the young people. This is enhanced by an unusually diverse, yet cohesive, well-trained and well-supported staff group. One area, however, that needs further work is dealing with bullying and it is therefore recommended that the management pays attention to this.

The owners show a real readiness to invest in the home and young people and staff alike are proud of recent refurbishment. Nevertheless, a fair amount of paintwork is scuffed and so there is another recommendation to consider how to keep it clean. Finally, although staff are excellent at completing health and safety checks, nothing has been done to address the consistently high fridge temperatures. As a result, this report requires that immediate action is taken to deal with this.

Improvements since the last inspection

The head of therapeutic care has developed behaviour management plans that provide clear guidance for staff in relation to positive handling. These are now in line with the behaviour management scheme adopted by the home. She also provides 'briefings' which address any developments affecting behaviour management. Young people therefore benefit from particularly up-to-date attention to their needs.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Staff provide a truly, culturally varied, selection of meals for the young people. They encourage the girls to help with the planning and cooking and try out different menus. Evening meals frequently celebrate different countries' traditional cuisines.

Young people attend all necessary health appointments due to there being a good system to prompt staff to remember them. The home ensures that there is a monthly review for each young person which includes reports in relation to health, hygiene and fitness. They also work well with the girls to develop their understanding of sexual health, smoking, alcohol and drugs. This means that young people can depend on staff being exceptionally up-to-date about their health needs.

There is a particularly thorough approach to the storage, recording and administration of medication. For example, staff ask the GP to prescribe homely remedies for particular young people, rather than having one supply for everyone. As a result, young people are well protected from medication errors.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Staff protect young people's privacy in all the ways specified by their policies and procedures. In particular, young people are aware of confidentiality rules and are confident that these will be kept. Managers ensure that there is always a female member of staff on shift to protect the girls' dignity. There have been no complaints since the last inspection.

Staff demonstrate an exceptional level of commitment to following child protection policies and procedures to the letter. They are also very good at working with other agencies and professionals, such as the looked after children (LAC) nurse. They record accidents and injuries thoroughly and in line with data protection requirements.

In their desire to understand behaviours and alter them via therapeutic means, staff do not have sufficient clarity about responding to bullying. For example, it is only recorded when it leads to a restraint or incident. Nevertheless there is a plan for training staff in this area and good policies and procedures in place. This means that young people are currently not necessarily learning about bullying and how to deal with it, within the home.

It is not unknown for young people to go missing from the home, but staff are sensible and thorough in their response to these infrequent incidents.

Senior management are passionate about a therapeutic basis to behaviour management and keeping restraints to an absolute minimum. Equally, they are

striving to achieve the highest standard in the chosen system of physical intervention. Staff are proud of the fact that since changing to this system, the numbers of restraints have dropped dramatically. Therapeutic behaviour management plans are particularly detailed and child centred. Sanctions are proportionate and appropriate and some, for particular behaviours, have been agreed with the young people. Staff record sanctions well and young people nearly always sign their agreement that these are fair. When there are clashes between young people, staff take the earliest opportunity to do one-to-one work with them. There are frequent meetings of all the young people and staff on duty, which young people can chair. They are clear that this is an opportunity to discuss both positives and negatives. Staff are thorough in their recording of incidents and debrief girls and colleagues when necessary. All of this means that young people have a good opportunity to develop insight and improved behaviours.

The home uses highly developed risk assessments, which are reviewed regularly, both for individual young people and the premises. Staff ensure that all requirements for fire safety are fulfilled, including unusually frequent fire drills, in the evenings, as well as day times. They are also good about performing all necessary health and safety checks, such as daily recording of fridge and freezer temperatures. They are not clear, however, about what temperatures are unacceptably high for a fridge. This means that food may not be being stored safely.

There are thorough recruitment procedures in place, with all possible checks being carried out. Furthermore, young people have the opportunity to be part of the interview process. This means that young people can feel secure about the staff who care for them.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The management at this home provide an exceptional variety of therapeutic interventions, such that they can provide therapy tailored to each individual young person. Specialist therapists now provide these sessions outside of the home and school, which works well for the young people. One social worker says 'I'm particularly impressed with the therapeutic work they do'. This means that young people have the greatest possible opportunity to address the problems underlying their behaviours and therefore change.

There is excellent communication between staff in the home and the different schools attended by the young people. Staff meet with teachers regularly to ensure mutual understanding of updated personal education plans. This level of collaboration has meant, for example, that one girl has been able to get GCSEs and move on to a boarding college.

Young people can access a wide variety of activities in the community, many of them involving sport. However, staff make every effort to find opportunities which suit particular individuals, such as choirs. Working as a team, staff and young people

occasionally raise funds for local charities. As a result, the girls are enabled to enjoy their favourite hobbies and, in many cases, keep fit.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

One social worker says 'They're doing a very good job maintaining the placement because a lot of difficult things have been happening. I don't know where my client would be without them'.

The home's therapeutic placement plans are detailed and clear, based firmly on the care plans outlined in LAC documents. They are set out under the same outcome areas as this report. This keeps staff focused on outcomes for young people. Additionally, key workers complete monthly summaries which act as frequent internal reviews. These staff also accompany the girls to statutory reviews and support them to express their opinions. This means that the girls are aware that staff are keenly interested in their progress.

Files show exact details of what contact is and is not possible with families. Staff go to great lengths to support contact and also record these meetings particularly well. Admission planning is detailed and thorough, staff assist the process of settling in by providing welcome packs including soft toys and toiletries. Additionally, as part of this process, staff demonstrate the restraints they may need in extreme circumstances, so that they do not come as a shock. This is unusually thoughtful and demonstrates a real respect for the young people's dignity. All of these aspects of the home's functioning, contribute towards young people being able to feel at home.

Young people have many opportunities to raise issues and voice their opinions, particularly through house meetings. Staff respond to young people's requests, such as for new furnishings and décor, as far as they possibly can. Girls can negotiate later bed times or times to return from trips out, dependent on their behaviour. Equally, one young person is doing voluntary work as a result of a direct request. This means that young people can learn that their opportunities are linked with being responsible for their behaviour.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Staff give the girls freedom to be out in the community within reasonable limits and based on risk assessments. This is called independent time and can be limited or withdrawn as a sanction. Staff encourage young people to open bank accounts and budget for clothes, toiletries and gifts. Young people are also able to top up their pocket money by doing extra jobs in the home. All the girls are expected to contribute to the maintenance of daily chores. Where possible, staff teach young people to do food shopping. They are also encouraging the girls to use public transport instead of asking for lifts. All this means that staff are preparing young

people as well as possible, for taking care of themselves after leaving the home.

The girls are rightly proud of the recent refurbishment of the kitchen and lounge, as are the staff. Although there is a rolling programme of redecoration, much of the paintwork in other areas is scuffed. This reduces the homeliness of these areas. There is a large and well-equipped activities room, which now has a sink plumbed in to it. The bedrooms are spacious, well furnished and personalised. There is also a good size garden with a trampoline. This all means that the girls are living in spacious and well-furnished accommodation, which nevertheless, could be more homely.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. There is a particularly diverse staff group, which is reflected in all positions in the organisation. Staff also give a lot of thought to different ways of familiarising young people with a range of cultures. For example, they accompanied the girls to carnival celebrations this summer. As a result, the girls are confident about asking questions about difference. Staff accompany some young people to places of worship and are proactive in considering how to widen their cultural and religious knowledge.

Management keep the Statement of Purpose up-to-date and everyone is really excited about a newly created children's guide. This is a lively DVD and includes a scene where one of the girls interviews a member of staff about how the home works. This makes the guide exceptionally accessible to young people and their families.

Management have now got supervision and annual appraisals back on track such that both occur at appropriate intervals. There is high morale amongst this very stable staff group, who work well together as a team. This is despite considerable recent changes in the approach to behaviour management, with a much clearer focus on therapeutic support. Staff from the sister home nearby assist in covering in emergencies, so that there are always enough staff on shift. One factor in the stability of the staff group is the management commitment to providing good training opportunities. As a result, the vast majority of staff already have NVQ3 or above and the few new staff who do not, are working towards it. The head of therapeutic care provides new staff with a dummy file to illustrate how to create and maintain a care plan. All of this means that young people receive care from extremely well supported staff.

The owners are well known to young people and also work closely with staff, helping build the sense of community for which they strive. They also conduct monitoring visits and provide reports on a monthly basis as required by regulations. This means that young people can be confident that they are aware of any improvement needed as it arises.

The manager monitors all necessary records as required by regulations, which allows her to pick up problems and deal with them efficiently. Staff work on young people's files and keep them securely in the staff office, which is out-of-bounds to the girls.

What must be done to secure future 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 Provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Std.	Action	Due date
26	ensure that unnecessary risks to the health or safety of children accommodated in the home are identified and so far as possible eliminated. In particular ensure food is stored at the correct temperature. (Regulation 23(c))	01/11/2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure that staff follow all aspects of the policies and procedures on bullying and/or adapt the policy to make it meaningful to each young person (NMS 18.3)
- ensure the home is kept clean. In particular, consider regular ways of cleansing scuff marks. (NMS 24.3)