

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Jennie Christopher
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is registered to provide care for up to six young females who experience emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home is part of a private company which has an independent fostering agency, a total of three residential homes and an independent school.

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 enjoy excellent relationships with staff and as a result, they progress in all areas of their lives. Young people are consistently positive about the home and staff, reporting that they are supported to overcome barriers and challenges in their lives. Young people feel listened to and that staff are concerned for their well-being. Staff work hard to form both positive and effective relationships with parents, carers, education and a wide range of specialist services, to ensure a cohesive approach to care and placement planning. Social workers comment that staff communicate effectively with them and that communication is 'fantastic'. As a result, young people are able to build solid relationships in a nurturing environment.

The home management and senior teams guide and motivate the staff group, who say they feel well supported. Young people feel secure as a result of staff commitment and consistency of approach. Young people are supported to live in a group and to value others opinions and beliefs. Bullying is not currently raised as a concern. Young people are actively involved in consultation and service development through regular house meetings and individual work.

The management team is continually striving for improvement and are aware of the strengths and value of living in the home. However, weaknesses are not always recognised, although once identified are tackled promptly. There are several points for improvement identified as a result of this inspection. These include amongst others: reviewing the behaviour management policy including both the techniques used and recording of restraint; reviewing the recording of sanctions; reviewing

policies and procedures and ensuring all staff have had up to date safeguarding training.

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
5 (2001)	ensure when the Statement of Purpose has been reviewed or revised, a copy is made available to Ofsted within 28 days (Regulation 5(b))	27/09/2013
17A (2001)	ensure where a measure of restraint is used it is proportionate and no more force than necessary is used, with specific regard to the use of pain compliance and lock holds (Regulation 17A(2)(a)(b))	11/09/2013
17B (2001)	ensure sanctions are recorded in line with regulations. (Regulations 17B(3)(a-1))	27/09/2013

Recommendations

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

- revise the behaviour management policy, ensuring staff and young people are clear on methods of control and restraint that can be used (NMS 3.3)
- ensure staff training is up to date and evidenced, with particular regard to child protection refresher training (NMS 18.1)
- ensure policies and procedures which are available to staff are reviewed and up to date (NMS 22)
- ensure that where it is necessary to adjust the environment to safeguard and protect young people, the use of locks is based on careful risk assessment which is reviewed regularly. Further ensure that restrictions on movement for young person do not adversely affect others. (Vol 5 statutory guidance, paragraph 2.108 and NMS 10.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people make significant progress in all aspects of their lives, in relation to

their starting points. Staff provide thoughtful and individualised support, leading to improved confidence, self-esteem and better understanding of their personal history. Staff's unconditional positive regard supports strong attachments and the foundations to form and maintain meaningful relationships with family and peers.

Effective health promotion results in young people having an excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles and what this means for them. Smoking is not currently an issue and those who have smoked are able to quit through cessation support professionals. The excellent support and encouragement from staff ensures young people are able to understand their risk-taking behaviours and work positively towards reducing them. A social worker said staff 'do not panic' in these instances, resulting in young people being able to manage their behaviours more effectively.

Attendance at school is very good with excellent joint working between home and school enabling young people to progress and achieve in line with their peers. For example, some young people who have missed out on education previously have sat examinations and are predicted good grades. Staff and external agencies work together to overcome barriers to learning, support young people who struggle with attending education or who are inappropriately placed. Those who are approaching school leaving age have plans in place for their future education and training to improve their life chances and outcomes. Young people have positive relationships in the community, accessing a range social and leisure activities individually and in groups.

While living in the home, young people learn a wide range of practical skills, such as cooking meals for the group. In conjunction with this, they learn essential self-care and life skills in preparation for moving on to independence or their next identified placement. Young people who have moved on often stay in touch with staff in the home and many have benefitted from outreach work. Where moves have not been as successful or are unplanned, staff endeavour to make the ending as positive as possible for the young person.

Quality of care

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

Young people thrive as a result of constructive and nurturing relationships with staff who are clearly concerned with all aspects of each young person's welfare. Observed interactions are open and caring. Young people are extremely positive regarding their relationships with staff suggesting they 'get me' and that they have taught them simple things, including trying a more varied diet. Young people are able to express themselves and this is clearly entrenched in the ethos of staff. Routine consultation with young people through house meetings and individual sessions ensures their views are sought on the service. Young people are actively encouraged to be involved in the review and care planning process. When their wishes cannot be acted upon they are provided with the tools to manage their emotions regarding this.

Staff have high aspirations for all young people in their care. Individual's well-being

is central to care planning and their future needs. Thoughtful and comprehensive combined care plans and risk assessments ensure young people enjoy consistent care to meet their individual needs. The continuous changing needs of young people are monitored and plans updated promptly with consultation, where appropriate, with parents, social workers and other professionals. Social workers and police officers comments are positive regarding communication and joint working with the focus on improving outcomes for young people. Furthermore, proactive and robust communication with education professionals enables young people to succeed and have their educational needs met, including those moving on to post 16 education.

Young people attend all required medical appointments and mostly enjoy good physical health. Prescribed medication is stored appropriately with procedures in place to ensure safe administration. In case of emergency, there is at least one first aider on site at all times. In house mental and emotional health specialists work closely with staff to ensure consistency of approach to support young people's emotional well-being and responses to concerning behaviour. Robust links with external mental health agencies and previous care providers has resulted in positive transitions and excellent continuity of care.

Young people are able to access independent advocates and know how to make complaints and who to complain to. Further information on how to access a range of advocacy and support services is clearly displayed. Young people do not currently identify bullying as an issue but are confident that staff would manage it well if it was an issue. However, the policy regarding bullying has not recently been reviewed. The well-maintained building has homely living and safety in mind, with areas for independent or group interaction. Young people have privacy and feel their belongings are secure due to locks on their bedrooms.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say they feel safe and that staff do all they can to keep them safe in the home. Staff promote young people's welfare and actively protect them from abuse or harm. Staff are confident in processes to follow should they be concerned for a young person's safety or welfare and know the homes and local child protection procedures. Flow charts are on display for ease of reference should an incident or disclosure occur. Staff are aware of individual young people's vulnerabilities and work effectively to ensure safety of all young people. However, some staff have not benefitted from safeguarding and child protection refresher training.

Robust procedures are in place should young people go missing from care and staff identify triggers and explored these with young people. Risk assessments are updated to reflect the 'pull' and 'push' factors and how these can be reduced or contained. Incidences of this and other risky behaviours such as self-injury reduced and in some cases cease. Where a young person is unable to limit their risk, staff work tirelessly, with the aide of external agencies to support the young person to be as safe as possible. Individual files contain up-to-date photographs of young people

in case of emergency. The company's recruitment policy is thorough and ensures young people are protected from harm by robust personnel checks.

Individualised positive behaviour plans reward young people through rewards such as day trips and tickets to festivals. Young people say they like the system, but are unsure of how effective it is due to its recent implementation. Sanctions are proportionate and young people are encouraged to reflect on their behaviour and consider how future responses could be different. However, records of sanctions are not in line with regulations. The positive approach from staff means young people rarely require restraint. The behaviour management policy and records of restraint though, do not make it clear what are acceptable holds. For example, the pre-printed record mentions locks and pain compliance. Pain compliance has been crossed though in the records to make it clear to staff not to use this technique. However, the inclusion of both of these techniques in records currently has limited impact on young people's wellbeing as restraints are used infrequently.

Young people are safe from fire and other hazards as a result of regular checks and practice evacuations. The use of locks on doors has not been subject to a risk assessment or reviewed on a regular basis to ensure they do not restrict movement whilst considering safety. Young people's risk assessments however, are robust and thoughtful to ensure young people are able to enjoy age-appropriate activities and take controlled risk in line with individual behaviours and vulnerabilities.

Leadership and management

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

The manager has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home and monitors the home through effective and evaluative checks and monitoring. However, there have been failures to identify non-compliance with the requirements of regulation; including sanction recording, restraint records and procedures and forwarding the revised Statement of Purpose to Ofsted. Excellent quality manager's monthly checks demonstrate the impact living in the home has for young people. Regulation 33 reports are thorough identifying strengths and weakness within the home. Young people where possible are spoken to as part of the Regulation 33 visit.

The management team seek the views of young people, their families and other stakeholders to help ensure young people continue to benefit from an evolving and improving service, although responses can sometimes be sparse. The comprehensive development plan identifies key areas for improvement, including how recommendations from previous inspections have been implemented in practice. The policies and procedures available for staff to use have not been reviewed for several years and do not reflect the practice within the home.

The provider meets the aims and objectives as set out in the Statement of Purpose and staff fully understand the functions, purpose and ethos of the home. The young people's guide is in a simple format and contains information on external advice and

advocacy services.

The home demonstrates excellent multi-agency working to improve outcomes for young people. Specialist mental health services, drugs workers and specialist police officers amongst other services, are actively involved to ensure the best possible care and outcomes for young people. Police suggest the home have a 'great relationship' with them. Young people are supported to complain when necessary about services they receive. Complaints from young people and families are managed swiftly and effectively and there have been no complaints from the local community.

A consistent and enthusiastic staff team, who are receiving specialist training including self-harm awareness, cares for young people. However, not all staff have received basic safeguarding refreshers. Staff have regular challenging supervision and appraisals. Newly appointed staff complete a thorough induction programme specific to the service, based on the Children's Workforce Development Council's induction standards.

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* and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes.