

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Stephen Halliley
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is part of a large private children's care organisation and is registered to accommodate five boys with emotional and behavioural difficulties or a learning disability. The home offers a therapeutic service to boys with assessed needs linked to sexually-inappropriate behaviour. The home has a school on a site and this is registered with the Department for Education.

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**.

This is a good home with some outstanding aspects to the service provided to young people.

Young people are provided with high quality, highly individualised care based around clear, regularly reviewed care and placement plans. Young people are very involved in this review process and this ensures they are kept fully informed about the plans for their lives and any changes to those plans. This has led to some outstanding outcomes for young people; excellent attendance and achievement in education from their starting points, vastly improved self-regulation of inappropriate behaviours and successful transitions to foster families or adult placements.

Young people speak very highly of staff and of their time in the home. They talk about staff supporting them to take responsibility for their own health needs, helping them develop a wide range of life and independent living skills and helping them develop a clear awareness about their own health and safety. Young people are very clear their voices are heard by staff and that staff respond very well to any issues they may raise. They refer to staff as 'fantastic' and it is clear there are strong, respectful and supportive relationships between staff and young people.

Young people say they feel very safe in the home and feel that, during their time living in this home, they are very well looked after. Young people are very aware of the robust risk assessment processes in place and fully acknowledge these are there

to help keep them safe. They are fully involved in reading and amending these risk assessments. This will help prepare them for independent living as they will be more aware of what activities and situations could present risks to them and of methods they can use to minimise these risks.

The Registered Manager leads by example and is very dedicated and committed to providing the best possible care to young people living in her home. She is well aware of the current strengths and weaknesses of the home and has a well thought out development plan in place to ensure the home continues to improve.

Shortfalls were noted in the robustness of the Registered Manager's monitoring of some aspects of the home, primarily the recording of the administration of medication and the completeness of sanction and restraint records. Additionally there is a need to send an updated copy of the home's statement of purpose to HMCI as there have been some significant changes made to this document recently.

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 that the registered person notifies HMCI of any revisions to the Statement of Purpose within 28 days (Reg 5 (b))	30/11/2013
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control restraint or discipline a record is made in a volume kept for the purpose which includes details of the child's behaviour leading to the use of the measure and the time of the use of the measure (Reg 17 (B) (3) (b) (d))	31/10/2013
34 (2001)	ensure the registered person maintains a system for monitoring the matters set out in schedule 6, especially any medicines administered to any child accommodated in the home. (Reg 34 (1) (a) Schedule 6 (14))	31/10/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure there is a complete written record of any medication given to a child during their placement (NMS 6.15)

- ensure the manager regularly monitors, in line with regulations, all records kept by the home to ensure compliance with the home's policies, to identify any concerns about specific incidents and to identify patterns and trends. Immediate action is taken to address any issues raised by this monitoring; this is specifically regarding stock errors in prescribed medication (NMS 21.2)
- ensure all staff's work is consistent with regulations, national minimum standards and the homes policies and procedures; with specific regard to the completion of all necessary records relating to young people. (NMS 21.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Young people make tremendous progress in all aspects of their lives while living in this home. This is in terms of educational attendance and achievement, social skills, self-confidence and managing their own behaviour.

Young people are appropriately confident within the home and are able to clearly express their views and opinions, often in a well thought out and very articulate manner. Young people are aware of why they are living in this home and the behaviours which led to this. They are fully supported to learn from this ensuring they are better able to self-regulate their behaviours. This enables them to move to appropriate placements such as semi-independent placements or foster families. Staff are very aware of the progress young people make living in this home. They talk of young people arriving with no self-confidence whatsoever, having been neglected or poorly supported in their previous placements. Now they say young people's 'confidence has grown and grown, education is going really well, independence skills are building, they have grown physically through eating a healthy balanced diet and they are well dressed and take pride in their appearance.'

Young people have regular access to a range of health professionals and appointments are made should they fall ill. Young people say they are made to understand what being healthy is about and they are very actively involved in putting together the menus. A high level of support is also provided to support young people to stop smoking. This has had a big impact and smoking has reduced significantly showing young people are responding appropriately to information about their health and taking personal responsibility for living a healthy lifestyle. Young people also have weekly sessions with a specialist therapist and this has a positive impact on their self-esteem as they develop a clear understanding of their emotional health and psychological well-being.

Staff are clear that education is the key area of improvement as young people have arrived here as non-attenders or with large gaps in their educational histories. All young people attend college and are said by staff to be thriving now the right placements and courses have been found. For those on part-time courses the home provides life skills training on the days young people do not attend college. This ensures young people are supported to develop their academic, social and life skills

in preparation for moving on from this home.

Young people are very involved in the day to day planning which takes place in the home; planning menus, activities, holidays and having a strong say in the decoration of the home. This ensures young people know their views and opinions are important to staff and that they live in an environment where they are seen as an integral part of the home. This home is a supporter of 'Hearing dogs for the deaf'. To support this young people run coffee mornings, hold plant sales or deliver the local village newsletter to homes in the area. Any money they raise is donated to the charity and to date they have raised well in excess of £200. This ensures young people understand the needs of others and further develops their sense of social awareness.

All young people have appropriate contact with those who are important to them. This is well supported by the home and, through some excellent joined up work with social workers, some young people have rebuilt relationships with brothers and sisters and other family members which had previously proved very difficult. This ensures young people have a clear sense of their place in their families and maintain these important relationships while living in the home.

Young people have independence programmes put in place and work well towards achieving the targets set in these. Skills learnt include keeping your room tidy, hoovering, laundry and ironing, shopping, budgeting, cooking and independent travel. This ensures young people are equipped with many of the skills they will need to have when they move on to adult placements. Developing and honing these skills also has a significant impact in improving young people's self-confidence and feelings of self-worth.

Quality of care

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

Young people have very good relationships with staff. There is openness between them, a clear sense of trust in the adults and this allows young people to talk openly with staff about all aspects of their lives. Young people say they get on very well with staff and that they are 'fantastic'. This relationship is reinforced as young people have apologised to staff for recent incidents which have led to restraint, a rare occurrence in this home. This again shows a heightened level of emotional maturity being displayed and a desire to maintain these important relationships. Social workers and independent reviewing officers (IRO) comment on the child-focused, caring and very supportive staff team who 'have a good understanding of diverse need.' This approach ensures young people benefit from high quality care being provided by a dedicated, knowledgeable and committed staff team. It also provides a range of positive adult role models for young people which have not always been present in their lives.

Interactions between the young people are generally positive and staff are very aware of the changing dynamics which can develop quickly in a group of three young men. This ensures relationships remain positive and young people are clear that

bullying does not occur in the home.

Young people are very clear that their views are sought, listened to and acted upon by staff. Regular house meetings are held and staff respond to young people's requests and ensure minutes of the meetings are displayed on the young people's notice board. Complaint forms are also available on this board ensuring young people have an open and simple way to raise any issues about the running of the home. Young people fully understand the procedure and are clear on the responses they would expect to receive and the timescales in which they should get these.

Young people are actively involved in their review meetings ensuring they remain fully aware of plans that are in place for them. Social workers and IRO's comment on the contribution to reviews as being 'concise, informative and very helpful.' This ensures that a good overview of the care provided to young people is available and a clear plan for future targets and placements can be developed with a valued contribution from everyone involved, including the young person themselves. Young people say their placement plans are 'reviewed monthly with a keyworker and I sign each update to show I agree with and understands the changes that have been made.' This again shows young people that their views and feelings are important in planning their day to day care.

Young people have regular appointments with doctors, dentists and opticians ensuring their physical health needs are well met. Prescribed medication is given according to the prescription though there has been a lack of clarity as to whether some medication is for a fixed course or to be given as and when required. Without being clear on this the home cannot be certain they are giving the medication correctly. The Registered Manager has spoken with the pharmacy and taken measures to ensure all information is clearly recorded on any future prescriptions. A record is kept of all medication administered to young people though there are gaps in these records including the time of administration, the signature of the staff involved in giving the medication and on one occasion the fact that medication was given at all. This became clear when records were cross-referenced but there is a need to keep a complete and accurate written record of all medications administered to young people while they are living in the home.

Young people all participate fully in weekly sessions with a specialist therapist. Additional input from child and adolescent mental health services is also available if appropriate. This ensures the emotional and psychological health needs of young people are well supported at all times.

Education is given a high priority by staff. They work alongside young people to identify the right courses for them and the right provision for them to attend. Staff were observed supporting young people by telephone to remain at college for the full day and to achieve their goals. This was done in a focused manner and reflected back to the young person the positive outcomes they achieve through remaining in college. The young person listened well, completed his day and returned to the home very pleased with his achievements. One IRO is very clear that the impact of staff on young people's educational attendance and achievement is very positive saying 'staff

have provided excellent support and guidance that enabled this young person to move on and succeed at school and in social activities.'

Young people enjoy a range of activities designed to further develop their social skills and ability to cope in a range of social situations. This includes going to youth clubs, sports clubs, the cinema, theme parks and meals out with staff. Equality and diversity issues are clearly addressed in daily living with staff tailoring daily care to meet young people's individual needs and wishes. Young people also participate in a range of cultural evenings, religious festivals and have a developing awareness of the cultural and ethnic backgrounds of others. This includes an arrow on the ceiling pointing to Mecca and all young people understand the significance of this.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say they feel safe in this home and they are kept safe by a range of health and safety checks, robust risk assessments and a very diligent system of staff maintaining an awareness of these risk assessments and any updates made.

Each young person has an individual risk assessment and there are also risk assessments in place for all activities young people take part in. New activities must have a risk assessment put in place by the Registered Manager before they can be undertaken. This ensures young people are able to take part in age appropriate activities and to take managed risks in line with their ability and understanding. Before taking part in any activity young people and staff must read the associated risk assessment and sign this along with the senior member of staff on duty. This ensures all parties are aware of the risk assessment, any updates which may have been made and any safety measures in place such as stating clearly that swimming in water which does not have a lifeguard is not allowed at any time.

Young people take part in regular fire drills ensuring they know how to respond should there be a fire. Young people were able to talk me through the emergency evacuation procedure including where the meeting point is showing they clearly understand this procedure. Regular tests and checks of fire alarms, fire fighting equipment and emergency lighting ensure young people are adequately protected against the risk of fire. Young people are also given a health and safety guide to keep in their room. This gives hints and tips on keeping safe and living in a safe environment. This covers areas such as safe use of the kitchen, travelling in the home's vehicles, smoking and infection control and ensures young people take an active part in ensuring their own health and safety.

Young people do not go missing from this home. There is a protocol in place with the local police should young people go missing which ensures a consistent joined up approach would be put in place to ensure the safe return of young people.

Additionally the home has individual protocols in place for young people developed through a clear understanding of young people's vulnerabilities. In discussion staff are very clear on the actions they should take if young people were missing from the home and signed protocols show they are fully aware of the systems and policies in place.

There have been 67 sanctions given since the last inspection in December 2012. These have been reducing with time showing young people are developing techniques to self-regulate their behaviours without the need for staff to intervene. Records of sanctions are clear but several do not include the time of the behaviour which led to the sanction being given. The use of physical restraint has dropped significantly and there have been only three restraints since the last inspection. This again shows young people are managing themselves in a far more appropriate manner and staff do not need to resort to using physical interventions. One of the restraint records does not include details of the young person's behaviour leading up to the restraint. Though it states this information can be found in the incident report it should be recorded in the restraint book as required. The Registered Manager has signed this report but has not picked up on this missing information.

All staff are subject to range of robust checks and vetting before they are able to work in the home. They are then put on the rota as additional staff for a period of two to three months. This enables them to shadow more experienced staff, to build relationships with young people and allows managers to ensure they are competent before undertaking one to one work with young people. The visitor's book is used unfailingly and any visitors are chaperoned around the house while young people are at home. This approach ensures young people are protected from potential abuse or harm being perpetrated by adults who work with them or who visit the home.

There have been no allegations or suspicions of harm in this home since the last inspection. Staff receive regular updates and training in safeguarding and child protection which ensures they are aware of their responsibilities should a disclosure or allegation be made. This will allow staff to respond in a timely, appropriate and professional manner towards the alleged perpetrator and alleged victim and ensure that the correct protocols are followed should the disclosure lead to any further action being necessary.

Leadership and management

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

This home is well managed on a day to day basis and the Registered Manager is fully aware of the progress the home has made and the progress she wants it to continue to make. Staff supervision is regular, training is carried out and refreshed at suitable intervals and the staff are skilled, knowledgeable and able to work in a consistent manner with a group of young people who have complex needs.

The main areas of progress since the last inspection centre around the robustness of the risk assessment system to ensure young people's continued safety and welfare

and the introduction of their health and safety guide as mentioned above. There has also been a marked improvement in the therapeutic processes and the therapist involved has used his knowledge to help everyone engage in a holistic manner. This ensures young people receive a consistent approach from staff and that therapeutic programmes developed are adhered to by all staff.

The Statement of Purpose has been regularly updated and makes it clear that this home offers a therapeutic service to boys with assessed needs linked to sexually-inappropriate behaviour. The updates to the statement of purpose have not been sent through to Ofsted in the last year which means Ofsted are not able to maintain a complete awareness of the services the home provides. Young people are very aware of how the home runs and the services and level of care they provide. The children and young people's guide is available in two formats with one being specifically designed for younger or less literate young people. This helps ensure that all young people can fully understand how they will be looked after while living in this home.

This home is monitored on a monthly basis by an external visitor. Reports from these visits provide an opinion as to the standard of care provided and are sent through to Ofsted in a timely manner. The Registered Manager also monitors the home on a monthly basis and produces detailed reports from this monitoring activity. However, the system in place for monitoring the administration of medication has focused solely on ensuring stocks tally with running totals which is also checked through regular medication audits. A more rigorous system would have highlighted the omissions in recording previously mentioned. Additionally when audit checks did not tally insufficient action was taken to trace the discrepancy which was due to the missed recording of the administration of medication noted above.

The Registered Manager has a good understanding of the strengths of the home; a diverse and consistent staff team, the location of the home allowing them to work with a diverse multicultural group of young people and the placement matching process and is fully aware of the perceived weakness around some of the recording processes. There is a clear development plan in place to ensure the home continues to progress and many areas on the plan have already been achieved. Areas to address include improving equality, inclusion and diversity work, improving the evidencing and cross referencing of work done with young people and to ensure staff receive full training from the therapist. By following this plan the Registered Manager will ensure the continued development of her staff, improvement in the service offered and outcomes for young people.

This home is very well resourced. There are adequate numbers of staff on duty at any one time and these staff ratios are currently higher than usual due to the home having a number of staff on internal secondments. In the rare event of the home needing to use staff from another home within the organisation at short notice these staff must complete a series of checks before working directly with young people. This includes being given a detailed handover, reading young people's pen pictures and reading and signing risk management plans. This ensures these staff are as informed as possible about the young people they will be working with so they can

work in the consistent manner of all other staff and respond appropriately to any situation which may arise.

All staff are well trained and many courses are regularly updated to ensure professional knowledge remains current. All staff have undertaken mandatory training in safeguarding, behaviour management, administration of medication, first aid and fire safety. This ensures a high level of practice when working with young people. Staff receive regular supervision and an annual appraisal. Staff comment that this system 'absolutely supports me to do my job.' Most staff have completed professional qualifications and several more are very close to completing their awards. All new staff are entered on appropriate courses once their employment has been confirmed. This further supports the consistent and well trained approach of the staff to their work with young people.

Young people's records are generally very clear and detailed. They are kept securely and are split into a number of files which aids their accessibility and the monitoring process. This would also help young people to have a clear understanding of their life in the home should they choose to look at their files either now or in the future.

There has been one notification sent through to Ofsted since the last inspection. This was dealt with appropriately and clearly evidences the Registered Manager's knowledge of when issues need to be shared with outside agencies such as Ofsted or children's safeguarding teams. This also ensures Ofsted, as a regulator, are able to maintain their overview of what is happening in the home. There have been no complaints received since the last inspection and this supports the impression of this being a well-managed, stable and well run home where young people are provided with a very good experience of being looked after.

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.