

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Elaine Cray
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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

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.

Overall effectiveness

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

Children and young people receive personalised care and therapy at this service. Clear frameworks to support their behaviour, health, education, social and safeguarding needs are in place but not always consistently implemented by staff. Children and young people value their relationships with staff and these have been a key part to their stability during some challenging periods over recent months.

Children and young people are supported to attend education. There is a strong commitment to help them address significant deficits in educational attendance and achievement. Children and young people attend the home's school and some attend colleges in the community.

Children and young people's individuality is identified and there is a clear commitment to promoting equality and diversity in the home. While procedures are in place to include children and young people's wishes, feelings and views in the running of the service, they do not feel listened to and would like their views to be more valued. There is little evidence that young people contribute to the development and running of the home.

Safeguarding procedures promote sound risk and behaviour management processes but these currently impact poorly on young people and they acknowledge little improvement in their behaviour. Children and young people's safety and risk taking activities are closely monitored and there is good inter-agency liaison. Children and young people say they are safe. They are provided with care and opportunities that enable them to explore emotional resilience and change behaviours. They have complex difficulties and staff strive to manage challenging behaviours, sometimes with poor outcomes, particularly in terms of physical intervention. The safety and welfare needs of children and young people are compromised due to poor group dynamics and the significant negative behaviours of some young people in the home.

Procedures are established but sometimes poorly implemented by staff and monitored by the manager. Staffing arrangements and training are not in keeping

with the home's Statement of Purpose and leadership and management is judged as inadequate at this inspection.

There are seven statutory requirements and nine recommendations made as a result of this inspection.

Areas for improvementStatutory 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
15 (2001)	promote the contact of each child with his parents, relatives and friends in accordance with the arrangements set out in the placement plan (Regulation 15.1 (a))	30/09/2011
17A (2001)	ensure a measure of restraint may only be used on a child accommodated in a children's home for the purpose of preventing injury to any person (including the child who is being restrained) and preventing serious damage to the property of any person (including the child who is being restrained) (Regulation 17A.1 (a) and (b))	30/09/2011
17A (2001)	ensure measures of restraint used on a child accommodated in a children's home is proportionate, and no more force than is necessary should be used. (Regulation 17A. 2 (a) and (b))	30/09/2011
25 (2001)	provide, with regard to the size of the children's home, the Statement of Purpose, and the number of and needs of the children and the need to safeguard and promote their health and welfare, a sufficient number of suitably qualified, competent and experienced persons working at the children's home (Regulation 25.1 (a) and (b))	30/09/2011
30 (2001)	ensure any events listed in Schedule 5 are notified to the persons listed without delay (Regulation 30.1)	30/09/2011
18 (2001)	ensure children accommodated at the in the home are provided with appropriate leisure facilities and activities (Regulation 18.2 (b))	30/09/2011
27 (2001)	ensure all staff receive appropriate training (Regulation 27.4 (a))	31/10/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure children's views, wishes and feelings are acted upon, in the day to day

running of the home and children understand how their views have been taken into account, and where significant wishes or concerns are not acted upon, they are helped to understand why (NMS 1.1 and 1.2)

- ensure wishes, feelings and views of children and those significant to them are taken into account in monitoring staff and in developing the home (NMS 1.7)
- provide an environment and culture, to promote models and support positive behaviour that all staff understand and implement (3.2)
- ensure staff working in the home understand their role in helping to prevent and counter bullying by any adult or child living or working in the home (NMS 3.11)
- ensure methods to de-escalate confrontations or potentially violent behaviour are used wherever appropriate to avoid the use of physical restraint (NMS 3.13)
- ensure all staff are trained in the use of physical restraint techniques and only use the home's agreed techniques. Ensure training is regularly refreshed (NMS 3.15)
- ensure the home carries out regular reviews of incidents of challenging behaviour, examines trends or issues emerging from this, to enable staff to reflect and learn to inform future practice (NMS 3.21)
- review the risk assessment process in relation independence preparation packages to encourage young people to take appropriate risks as a normal part of growing up. (NMS 4.4)
- ensure all areas of the home are well maintained, this is with particular regard to the soft furnishings in the lounge and the working order of the cooker (NMS 10.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Children and young people make progress in this service. They thrive, learn and develop. While children and young people's social workers, other professionals and staff identify improved outcomes in education, health and behaviour, some children and young people do not have such positive views about their progress at the home. They acknowledge experiencing difficult and challenging times over recent months, with some young people being moved on from the home and ongoing tensions within the group dynamics in the home. Children and young people have witnessed and been involved in periods of poor engagement with staff and significant negative behaviours. These poor experiences, inconsistent behaviour management strategies and some shortfalls in staffing arrangements negatively impact on their self confidence, emotional resilience and experience of feeling looked after.

Children and young people clearly acknowledge the importance of the ongoing positive attachments and relationships they have with staff, especially their key workers. While they experience disruption they are reassured by the stability provided by their key working relationships with staff.

There is clear evidence that children and young people do grow in self-confidence, develop skills and change behaviours. Staff say that young people who have presented difficulty in settling in previous placements have been able to form good attachments. Social workers' and other professionals' comments about outcomes for children and young people include 'better sense of self esteem', 'very mature' and 'children that come here leave here on a more stable footing'.

Children and young people develop a greater understanding of their backgrounds and identities because they have their needs clearly assessed and their individuality is respected and facilitated. Young people are given opportunities to make sense of their backgrounds, experiences and their behaviours in regular therapy sessions, key working sessions, group workshops and in their day to day experiences in the home. They are encouraged to express themselves in terms of their cultural and religious identities and their needs are facilitated. Children and young people are cared for in an environment where staff understand how going to worship, eating certain foods and visiting different areas to shop are important.

Children and young people's attendance at education is improved. They achieve well at school and have addressed significant deficits in both attendance and achievement. Children and young people have developed reading and writing skills, work towards key areas in the national curriculum and complete varying levels and receive certificates for ASDAN education. Some young people now manage attendance at local colleges in the community. Children and young people are able to try different opportunities and develop new skills, including learning to swim, qualifying as a referee, developing independence skills and doing activities in the local community. While staff and social workers present positive views such as 'never used to go to school and now 100% attendance school attendance' and 'confidence has improved', children and young people present a poor perspective on their development. They are unsure if they are they are congratulated and rewarded for their attendance at school and their achievements. They acknowledge they receive pocket money and a clothing allowance. Children and young people also presented uncertainty about access to activities. While they acknowledge activities are subject to their behaviour they also perceive these opportunities are often constrained by money. For example not having tools to fix their bikes and not being able to have a drink when on activities.

Children and young people understand there are processes such as fortnightly house meetings so they can express their views, feelings and wishes. However they do not always feel listened to because these meetings are controlled by the manager and staff, including drawing up the agenda. They are able to occasionally chair the house meetings and are encouraged to write the minutes, but do not feel fully involved in the running of the home. They do not always understand why certain things happen, for example when their rooms are searched. Children and young people presented a variety of ideas and suggestions for how the home may be improved, including having a suggestion box, but say these ideas are not really taken on board or valued by the manager and staff at the home.

Children and young people say their key workers and some staff make time to talk about their placement and future plans. They attend meetings to talk about how they are doing, review risk assessments with regarding their levels of risk and how independent time can be developed. While children and young people are supported with family contact, appointments with other support agencies and personal activities, there are times when family contact and personal hobbies have been compromised and cancelled.

Children and young people enjoy good and improved health because their needs are assessed, monitored and there is good health promotion. Their medical needs are well met and there is a strong focus on the emotional and mental health of children and young people, including regular therapy sessions. Young people understand how lifestyle choices can impact on their health. They lead healthier lifestyles including balanced eating, exercise and better personal hygiene. Young people are supported to access a variety of medical and health agencies and they begin to develop a good understanding about how their emotional and mental wellbeing is part of their health.

Some young people are looking forward to but are hesitant about their transition to young adulthood and living independently. Young people are supported with opportunities to develop independence skills within a very structured framework for care. This structured approach is due to significant safeguarding concerns. Well reviewed risk management strategies set out clear boundaries with regards to free and independent time away from the home. There are additional behaviour management strategies and limitations placed on young people who are due to leave the service. For example older young people are not able to watch younger age certified films on DVD or have TVs in their room. These same young people are old enough and able to, during their free time to visit the cinema and will soon be living independently when they can watch whatever they like on TV. These circumstances do not always reflect the reality of their imminent move to independent living and the challenges they will have to cope with once they have left the nurturing and structured environment of the home.

Quality of care

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

Children and young people are looked after by a committed staff team who promote a nurturing and stable environment in order for children and young people to explore and address complex and risk presenting behaviours. There is an integral therapeutic process to the framework of care at this service.

Care planning, risk management procedures and behaviour management plans are in place. Staff have a good knowledge about the social, cultural and religious backgrounds of young people, and this is usefully documented in young people's files and placement care plans. Individual educational plans provide young people with effective packages to support their learning processes. There is a school attached to the home. Staff also maintain working relationships with local colleges. The routines

in the house including bedtimes, getting up, mealtimes and staff handover meetings are arranged in order to promote education. Clear communication and positive relationships between the care and teaching staff support young people to attend and develop educational, social and behavioural skills.

Due to the behavioural needs and experiences of children and young people using this service, each young person's placement is centred on regular weekly therapy. Some staff have a good understanding of how children's and young people's challenges and experiences have impacted on them and the need for a very structured approach to their care. While there is an expectation that staff receive training and on-going consultancy regarding the specialised and therapeutic approach in this service, there have been recent shortfalls in this area. Children and young people continue to receive therapy, but staff, particularly new staff, lack training and consultancy about some very significant and challenging behaviour presented by some of the young people. Staff have knowledge of the children and young people's personalities and preferences but are inconsistent in implementing and making care and behaviour management plans meaningful to children and young people. There is a high level of commitment from staff and one social worker commented 'staff haven't given up' on the young person despite significant challenges. However the shortfall in skills, consistency and staff confidence have a negative impact on key elements to the care framework. For example maintaining positive relationships, behaviour management and enabling children and young people to participate in and feel good about their daily living routines, education, leisure activities and access to new opportunities.

There are processes for assessment and review of placement plan documentation and children and young people are part this process. Assessment and review of each young person's placement contributes to the level of care provided.

There is detailed written information about young people's contact arrangements. There also is a clear commitment to facilitating these sometimes complex arrangements between young people and their families. However, weaknesses within the management and staffing of this service impact on the implementation of the programme of activities and contact arrangements for children and young people. Prioritising and staffing the contact arrangements sometimes compromises the choices available to the other children and young people. The remaining staffing levels often mean that children and young people either have to stay in the house or do a group activity as opposed to facilitating individual hobbies.

Information about how to complain is clear and accessible to children and young people. Information is contained in the young people's guide and displayed in the house. Complaints are taken seriously and some have been referred to the local safeguarding children team. These issues have been subsequently investigated by the manager of the home. Children and young people say they know how to complain and have used the forms that are in place. They are not so confident about understanding the outcomes of their complaints and some do not feel listened to. The complaints records show that letters are sent to children and young people but the comments section in the central record is on occasion completed by and signed

for by the manager.

Participation of children and young people is promoted via fortnightly young people's meeting. The meetings are regularly implemented, but not necessarily valued by the children and young people. They feel the young people's meetings are limited because they do not facilitate opportunities for children and young people to set the agenda, air their views and put forward ideas and suggestions.

Children and young people's physical and emotional health is promoted and monitored. There are good joined up processes to meet the health and medical needs of children and young people. Clear assessment of health and medical needs are identified and staff liaise with appropriate health and advice agencies. There are effective procedures for the safe administration of medication. Healthy eating, good personal hygiene and regular exercise is promoted in key working sessions, group workshops and via the education process.

The accommodation is generally well maintained taking in to consideration the high levels of physical damage meted out by children and young people. The home provides a homely and comfortable environment. However there is not enough soft seating in the lounge, the existing settee is damaged and bean bags are deflated and uncomfortable. Young people's bedrooms are personalised and bathrooms have been refurbished to a good standard. Young people and staff are frustrated by how long the cooker takes to heat up and cook food. The TV in the pool room is damaged and young people have difficulty viewing their computer games.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children and young people say they are safe. They are unsure and hesitant about identifying improvements in their behaviour. They feel they have good relationships with most staff but are not always sure that all the staff working at the home challenge all young people about bullying. Social workers' comments and records show there are significant improvements in children's and young people's behaviour, risk taking activities and going missing from care.

A safeguarding focus for this service is to provide children and young people who present significant risk to others and are vulnerable themselves with improved safeguarding outcomes. Children and young people begin to understand the severity of previous experiences and are encouraged to engage with ways to change their behaviours.

Security and safety is a priority to the running of the home. Attention to the supervision of children and young people is detailed and structured. Staff are fully aware of the procedures regarding children and young people going missing from the home and procedures are included in each placement care plan. There are clear protocols to promote working in close partnership with the police. For those children

and young people who continue to place themselves at risk they receive a consistent and dedicated response from staff. There is a significant reduction in offending for children and young people at the home. The manager and staff understand the need for effective links with the local safeguarding team.

Safeguarding regimes such as children and young people having restricted access to the local community and high levels of supervision both inside and outside the house are appropriate to their significant vulnerability. These arrangements are key to the children's and young people's placements and make significant and immediate improvements to their safety and that of the community. These routines are open and transparent in the written information provided to children, young people, families and social workers prior to being placed at the home.

While safeguarding arrangements in the home are based on clear organisational policies and procedures they are not always robustly implemented and reviewed by the manager and staff. For example risk assessments are in place and are detailed. There are subsequent restrictions on children and young people having free time. However, a recent substantiated complaint about levels of staff observation of children and young people did not lead to any update within the risk assessment process.

There are also shortfalls in the implementation and review of behaviour management procedures in the home. While most staff are trained in behaviour management and physical intervention there are some poor outcomes for young people. Young people and staff identify periods of time when there have been significant challenging, aggressive and violent behaviour in the home. While there are behaviour management plans, some staff are clearly disempowered by the complex behaviour of specific young people in the group. Attempts to manage behaviour have little impact on some young people and this leads to negative group dynamics. Individual behaviours and attitudes escalate into significant group disturbances and there are some instances of a lack of control by staff in the home.

Some serious incidents have required children and young people to be physically restrained. While staff and young people are clear that these actions are only taken as a last resort, records show this not to always be the case. Children and young people are concerned about the levels of physical intervention. They witness other children and young people being restrained, have made complaints and acknowledge that staff have been injured while restraining children and young people. Records about these incidents are inconsistently documented and they do not provide good accountability to how concerns have been managed. While there is now a de-briefing process for young people, this had not previously been the case. Young people say they do not understand all the names for the holds and therefore do not know if staff are holding them correctly or if the records are correct. Sections in the central restraint log for a manager to review and sign each incident are procedurally completed and often in the same wording. The comments often focus on the poor behaviour of the children and young people and give little insight into how children and young people experienced the intervention or how it was carried out. The management of the home have not addressed concerning patterns of behaviour and

trends in physical interventions. Concerns from staff about the impact of specific young people on the welfare of other children and young people are ongoing and have received little if any redress from the management of the home.

Children and young people are protected by an effective and robust recruitment process that includes a comprehensive check on all staff applying to work at this setting. Personnel records are maintained to a good standard. Visitors are checked, vetted and monitored.

Children and young people live in a safe physical environment. Health and safety is well managed. Safety and servicing checks are carried out as required.

Leadership and management

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

The effectiveness of the management of this service is compromised by poor staffing arrangements, poor implementation and review of established policies and procedures, inconsistent and accountable maintenance of records and a significant shortfall in making notifications to Ofsted.

The home strives to provide children and young people with a stable, safe and nurturing environment. There is a foundation of good levels of care and support. However staffing arrangements are not managed in keeping with the home's Statement of Purpose. While the minimum staffing levels are adequate to cover when all young people are behaving well and located in the house, they are not able to accommodate the diverse and individual needs of the children and young people. For example facilitating contact at weekends and ensuring children and young people are able to make positive choices about activities and individual hobbies. There are also occasions when staffing levels have not facilitated behaviour management in the home. Firstly in terms of deflecting other young people away during times of physical intervention and secondly when shifts have been scheduled with staff who are not trained in physical intervention. Some staff have not received training and input into the specialist and therapeutic nature of the home and this compromises the level of care provided to children and young people.

The majority of the staff team for this service is experienced, however staff morale presents as low. Staff are concerned about the stability of the group of children and young people and the continuity and consistency of care provided to them. While staff value the high levels of personal support provided to them by the management of the home, they are unsure as to how their professional concerns are heard and addressed by the management.

Staff value the varied training programme and say they receive regular supervision. They are also given opportunities to discuss their role, professional development and the impact on working with young people with challenging needs in staff meetings.

Internal and external monitoring of the service is in place, but findings tend to be

very process led rather than measuring the outcomes for children and young people. The manager's monthly checks have not picked up the patterns and trends as identified in this inspection visit. Notifications of serious complaints and safeguarding referrals have not been made to Ofsted. Discussion with the line manager for the home demonstrates a clear awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the service. Some shortfalls were immediately responded to as a result of this inspection. The home's development plan is to be adjusted to meet the Registered Manager's and provider's commitment to re-establishing good standards of care, organisation and outcomes for young people.

Equality and diversity practice is **satisfactory**.