

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Louise Redfern
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is privately owned. It provides therapeutic care, accommodation with education and outdoor activities for up to eight young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

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 **adequate**.

Young people make good progress across all aspects of their welfare and development. Young people are settled in their placements; they are building trusting relationships with staff and as a result, feel they are well cared for and are safe in and around the home. This is significant given their starting points and individual needs. Young people develop strong community links in the local area, while maintaining a clear attachment to their family and community.

Young people receive well-planned care, taking into account their individual needs. The home strongly promotes positive outcomes for all young people. The staff team are particularly proactive and successful in engaging young people in education. As a result, young people make exceptional progress in their education.

Young people feel safe and protected because staff make safeguarding a priority in the home. However, recommendations and requirements have been raised to ensure improvements are embedded into practice and ensure the on-going safety of young people.

However, the significant shortfalls in recording, safe keeping and monitoring of medication and overall monitoring in the home has significant potential to negatively impact on the long term outcomes for young people. The management team has not embedded sufficiently to have made significant progress with regards the development plans for the home.

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
21 (2001)	ensure that the registered person shall make suitable arrangements for the recording, handling, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of any medicines received into the children's home (Regulation 21 (1))	31/10/2012
32 (2001)	ensure that the registered person takes adequate precautions against the risk of fire, in consultation with the fire authority about the use of door wedges. (Regulation 32 (1)(a))	31/10/2012
34 (2001)	ensure the system referred to in paragraph (1) shall provide for the consultation with children accommodated in the home, their parents and placing authorities. (Regulation 34 (3))	31/10/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure that sanctions for behaviours are clear, reasonable and fair (NMS 3.8)
- ensure that there is an emergency escape plan that all staff and children are familiar with and have practiced so they know what to do in an emergency (NMS 10.9)
- ensure that a written or electronic record is kept by the home detailing the time and date and length of each supervision held for each member of staff, including the registered person. The record is signed by the supervisor and the member of staff at the end of the supervision. (NMS 19.5)
- ensure there are clear and effective procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the home. This specifically refers to the development plan. (MNS 21.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are making good progress in the home because of the individualised and consistent support and care from a committed staff team. As a result, they are forming and sustaining positive attachments with staff and make good progress in developing their emotional resilience. Relationships between young people and staff

are extremely positive and behaviour is mostly very good. Staff are competent in helping young people to understand their individual histories and explore their own identities. Young people do not place themselves at risk by going missing or offending. The eradication of risk taking behaviours demonstrates the exceptional progress for young people, given their starting point on admission to the home.

Young people engage in a variety of activities in the home and in the local community; these increase their self-confidence, self-esteem and broaden their horizons. For example, young people regularly attend local youth clubs. One young person commented 'going to youth club gives me a chance to socialise with people my own age and make friends.'

Young people receive support from health professionals and staff to understand the importance of making healthy lifestyle choices. They enjoy a healthy lifestyle and take responsibility for some of their own medical health needs. They benefit from attending all routine health appointments and individualised and comprehensive therapy packages. Young people do have smoking habits; however, staff are being proactive with their support to discourage this.

Young people maintain full attendance at school. They are flourishing in the on-site education provision. As a result, they are excelling in education and making good progress. One professional commented 'Academically they are exceeding in relation to their peers.' Some young people also have part-time jobs. These help them to develop social networks, increase their confidence and prepare them well for adulthood.

Young people enjoy good opportunities to have contact with family, friends and other people who are important to them. Electronic and phone contact is promoted within the context of an appropriate balance between individual safeguards and risk assessments. Staff continue to make arrangements and support young people practically and emotionally with contact in order to develop and sustain appropriate relationships.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy positive and constructive relationships with staff. This is because staff are consistently concerned with young people's welfare. Firm boundaries and a clear structure encourage young people to behave appropriately in the home and in the local community. The management and staff team have regular discussions with young people regarding the day-to-day running of the home. These discussions take place during the well-attended young people's meetings and through individual discussions with young people. Young people have a clear understanding of how to make formal and informal complaints. The records show that complaints are rare. However, when young people complain they are usually satisfied with the way that things have been resolved. Young people have good access to their social workers and advocates and are helped by staff to understand when it is not possible to act

upon their wishes in all instances. The young person's guide to the home now gives information about how they can contact their independent reviewing officer. This information is important as it ensures that young people know who to contact if they have any concerns about their placement or plans generally.

Young people have exceptional attendance at the organisation's own school. They are supported, through the routine of the home, to engage in homework on a daily basis. The whole staff team celebrates all educational achievements and as a result all young people are flourishing in education.

Young people receive encouragement to lead healthy lifestyles. This includes taking an active part in menu and activity planning and attending all health appointments. Young people's emotional well-being is supported through an effective and individual therapy package. One young person commented 'therapy is good for me it helps me to look at things in my life. I have built a good relationship with my therapist and I am going to start looking at my life story in the future.' However, there are significant shortfalls in the recording, safekeeping and monitoring of medication at the home. As a result, safe practice cannot be ensured at this time and have the potential to affect the long term positive outcomes for young people.

The home is in a rural location and provides access to outdoor activities. Local towns are also accessible and young people can access youth clubs and sports clubs. There is an effective balance between free time and organised activities; this builds on young people's sense of individuality and promotes their inclusion in community activities. One young person commented 'I go to different youth clubs and dancing, but if I wanted to try a new hobby I am sure the staff would arrange it for me.' Issues of equality and diversity are addressed within daily living. Staff support young people to maintain contact with family, friends and the communities from which they originate within safe limits and in line with care plans.

The home itself is warm, welcoming and very well maintained, indoors and outside. Young people benefit from a homely atmosphere. They are encouraged to personalise their bedrooms and to take responsibility for the good care of their environment.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people report that they feel safe at the home and can talk to an adult when they are concerned. Staff are well trained in safeguarding young people and the home has extensive policies and procedures in place, which underpin the effective practice. The home has a strong focus on safeguarding young people. For example individual crisis management plans clearly identify young people's triggers and behaviours and effective intervention strategies. Young people have significant input in drawing up these plans, which ensures they are effective at meeting their individual needs.

There are clear safeguarding procedures in place should young people go missing and staff are clear how to respond. However, there have been no episodes of young people going missing since the last inspection. This is particularly significant when considering the past behaviours of young people prior to them being admitted to the home. The home has developed positive links with local police officers to support and promote the safety of young people in the home and the community.

Young people are protected by the proactive approach taken to behaviour management. Staff are all trained in behaviour management and physical restraint techniques and consistently apply these in practice. There are few incidents of challenging behaviour. Physical restraint is rarely used. Young people are supported to reflect on their own behaviour and develop mechanisms to develop their ability to manage their own behaviour. When sanctions are imposed young people regularly make comments and report that they feel the sanctions are fair. However, recording of sanctions is not always clear and as a result sanctions appear to be excessive and unfair.

The home is physically safe and appropriately secure. Staff pay excellent attention to health and safety management. They use comprehensive risk assessments around the home and in the local community. However, not all young people have had the opportunity to practice the emergency escape plan since being admitted to the home. In the event of an emergency this may pose a risk to individual young people and staff on duty. A further shortfall was identified, with fire doors being wedged open. In the event of a fire, this could significantly impact on the safety of young people and staff in the building. The manager took steps to rectify this shortfall at inspection and removed all wedges.

Leadership and management

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

There is a new manager in post who has made an application to be registered by Ofsted. The management team are a new team, who are committed to improving the service. The staff team is well-balanced in terms of age, gender and experience. The home is well resourced to meet the needs of the young people and high staffing levels are in place on each shift.

The home has a staff group who are enthusiastic and who use their own experiences, background and skills to develop young people's knowledge. The staff team state that they are well supported by the management team. The team is supported to meet the needs of the young people through regular team meetings, which focus on their individual needs and ways to improve practice in the home. For example, two staff are undertaking equine therapy training to support young people at the home. A shortfall in maintaining records of supervisions has been identified. As a result, it is not possible to evidence if staff are being supported through regular and effective supervision.

The one requirements in regard to the system for consultation has been repeated

because some progress has been made in gathering the views of young people, parents and stakeholders. However, information gathered is not being fully utilised to drive forward the development of service nor has it become embedded practice. This constitutes a missed opportunity to secure further development and improvement of the home. Two recommendations have been fully met since the last inspection. Staff members now have individual appraisals. Young people's views are incorporated into the appraisal process; this means that young people's views are taken account in the development plans for staff. The home's recruitment procedures have been improved since the last inspection; the verification of references prior to a member of staff commencing their employment is now being documented. One recommendation has not been fully met. There is a development plan in place, which identifies areas for improvements in the quality of care provided. However, it does not prioritise or identify the strengths of the home, ensuring the continuous improvement and development of the service.

The provider meets the aims and objectives of the Statement of Purpose. Staff and placing authorities are all clear about the aims and objectives of the home and what services and facilities the home provides. Young people are clear about what the home sets out to achieve and are, prior to admission given a children's guide which informs them about the service.

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.