

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Robin Whistlecraft
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Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	26/11/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is part of a range of children's services within a private care organisation. The home is registered to offer care and accommodation to four young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties; three are accommodated in the main house, one in a satellite unit some distance away.

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**.

This home provides an adequate quality of care. Managers and staff support young people with individual plans and care strategies. This means that the home promotes improved outcomes for young people. Managers have introduced a system for collating data so that they are better able to identify trends and take action. Managers take action if the home can no longer meet young people's needs, for example in relation to their education or their need for measures of control. Young people acknowledge that staff have helped them make progress. Children say they feel safe in the home, and they are safe. Managers understand the home's strengths. The home's management approach the home's development as a routine and regular matter for review. This report contains three requirements, but the matters needing attention do not involve adverse consequences for young people. The requirements relate to: the detail recorded in records of measures of control and information about staff contained in the home's Statement of Purpose.

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
4 (2001)	compile in relation to the children's home a written statement...which shall consist of a statement as to the matters listed in Schedule 1. This is in relation to the relevant experience of persons working at the children's home (Regulation 4 (1))	30/08/2013
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control restraint or discipline in a children's home, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose of which shall include - details of the child's behaviour leading to the use of the measure. This is in relation to the specific behaviour that reaches the threshold for physical restraint to be used (Regulation 17B (3)(b))	30/08/2013
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control restraint or discipline in a children's home, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose of which shall include - the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of restraint. (Regulation 17B (3)(f))	30/08/2013

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **adequate**.

Over time, young people generally settle, develop relationships with staff and learn better ways to deal with conflict and frustration. One said 'Things have got better...I now do everything that is expected of me.' Another said 'I'm not getting angry as much.'

Young people generally enjoy good health and support for their health needs. They benefit from access to various health care specialists such as dentists and opticians. Where necessary, young people experience specialist support for their emotional and psychological health needs. Young people learn about sexual health. Young people who experiment with smoking receive support to stop before a habit is developed.

Most young people attend school regularly. Some do not, but receive education through home tuition. Similarly, some young people make progress with their education; others find it hard to settle in education. Where the latter is the case young people have their education placements reviewed and plans set in motion to secure effective provision. This means that young people who do not engage with education benefit from support to achieve better education.

Young people are encouraged to make a positive contribution to the home and engage with the wider community. Young people have influence over the food they eat, over their leisure activities and the colour scheme in their bedrooms. Young people help with domestic chores and cooking group meals. Some young people are involved in local sports clubs and attending their local church. Others receive support

to try out a range of clubs and groups, such as football and cadets, but have not yet found an interest to stick with.

Young people have appropriate contact with their families and for some, there is improved contact which enables improved relationships. The home supports young people in this by providing a phone in the home as well as assistance to meet with family members, where appropriate.

The home's routines involve young people in some domestic chores. They also do some cooking, as well as their own personal care and laundry. In addition, as they get older young people start an internal independence training programme. This programme involves assessment of their skills and coaching in new skills. Some young people are making effective progress through this programme. These approaches mean that young people learn practical and life skills to prepare them for adulthood.

Quality of care

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

Young people are friendly to each other though that has not always been the case for some of the young people. Young people generally enjoy warm and respectful interactions with staff. Some young people seek out staff for banter and jokes. The home places clear boundaries and clear expectations on young people. This is through the home's routines as well as individual behaviour management plans and individual targets. This means that young people experience consistency within the home. Young people agree that staff apply the home's rules consistently.

Staff record both positive and negative consequences they administer in response to young people's behaviour. Staff record negative consequences in a volume used for all young people. Staff select negative consequences to reflect the misdemeanour, for example paying for damage. The entries do not sufficiently describe the effectiveness of the negative consequence imposed. Instead, staff describe the purpose of the measure, which that section of the record also asks for. There are no adverse consequences of this, and staff give young people the opportunity to comment on and discuss the incident and the measure imposed. However, this does mean that young people are not supported by sufficiently detailed records.

Young people are encouraged to influence certain aspects of the running of the home. Staff conduct regular group meetings with young people. In these meetings, they encourage young people to help choose the home's food and leisure activities. In addition, young people are encouraged to discuss the home's routines and rules. Staff explain why some wishes cannot be acted on.

Young people know how to make a complaint, both informally by speaking to a member of staff, or by formally submitting a complaint form. The home provides guidance and contact numbers by which young people can raise concerns about the care they receive. The home also invites young people, periodically, to comment

about the care they receive through individual questionnaires. This means that the home encourages young people to make constructive criticism and involve themselves in their care in that way.

Young people receive care that is in line with their placement plans. The home develops strategies that are individualised. These strategies are used for helping young people deal with the frustrations that prevent them from managing conflict or developing positive relationships. The young people's needs sometimes mean that more of the strategies are reactive, but the home uses rewards to encourage positive behaviour. This means that young people have an incentive to make progress.

The home's system for administering medication is safe and effective. Staff ensure that young people have routine health checks, as well as support to meet therapists and other health specialists. Staff have introduced sexual health information to meetings with young people. Staff try to dissuade young people from starting smoking, for example by making appointments with a specialist nurse. Staff also encourage young people to take part in physically active pursuits, from informal games outside to supporting attendance at sports clubs. These supports mean that young people generally experience good physical health.

Staff support young people's education by helping them with school work as well as assisting them to attend education. The provider has recognised problems in its own school and has made new educational arrangements to improve the support for some young people's education. For some other young people the provider has supplied home tuition to ensure there is education while the placing authority obtains an alternative, more appropriate placement. These factors mean that young people benefit from review of their educational progress and new arrangements, if necessary.

Staff in the home encourage young people to try out a range of leisure and sporting interests. This means that young people have the opportunity to learn about new skills, and pastimes, if they wish. Some young people have found interests that have engaged them while others have not.

Staff are aware of the cultural heritage of each of the young people. Staff support young people to continue to enjoy food from their cultural backgrounds, for example by trips to specialist food markets. Where young people have a faith staff ensure that they are able to practice it regularly. The home has materials that staff use to promote racial diversity and hold discussions about sexual orientation with the young people. Where some young people have English as a second language staff explore ways to enable the young people to use their first language. These factors mean that young people receive care that accommodates their diverse needs.

The home is appropriately located, and its internal design and garden are suitable for use as a children's home. Currently, the provider is carrying out some refurbishment and redecoration of parts of the home, with plans to carry out more. This means that young people benefit from accommodation that is being improved.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The home is physically safe and appropriately secure. Young people say they feel safe, there is no bullying and that they have an adult they can go to with any concerns. Staff are aware of young people's individual vulnerabilities. Most young people do not go missing. Others have reduced the frequency that they go missing.

The home has clear procedures, agreed with the local police and followed by staff, for taking action if young people go missing. The arrangements are individual to each young person based on individual risk assessments. The home's practices include using mobile phone contact, if possible, to keep in touch with the young person and checking areas where they might be. These arrangements mean that the home supports young people by clear practices to promote their safety if they go missing.

Staff are trained in appropriate ways to physically restrain young people. The home monitors the use of restraint and, in the event of increased frequency, calls for involved professionals together to review the situation. The home arranges for a young person's transfer to another placement if revised strategies do not lead to reduced incidences of physical restraint. Other young people, who have required physical restraint, have developed alternative skills so that the need for restraint has significantly reduced.

Staff record their use of physical restraint in dedicated volumes for each young person. Some records do not include enough detail about the specific behaviour that met the threshold for the use of physical restraint. While those entries show the build-up, sometimes the records use generalisations such as 'became physically aggressive'. There is no evidence that this has had an adverse impact on young people. The home's processes also involve staff in exploring the incident with the young person afterwards. However, it does mean that young people's care is not always supported by sufficiently detailed records.

Staff working in the home are vetted to make sure they are suitable, before they start to work with young people. Staff understand their responsibilities if they suspect or hear an allegation of possible abuse of a young person. The home appropriately refers potential safeguarding concerns to the local area designated officer for safeguarding. This means that the home safeguards young people by using appropriate protective practices.

Leadership and management

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

The home's Registered Manager has taken a secondment to another role. The provider has appointed an acting manager who has applied for registration as manager of the home. The acting manager is supported by weekly visits from his line

manager.

Since the last inspection the home has improved how staff record incidents where young people go missing from the home. The provider included the recommendation in the matters that the home's monitoring visitor checks at each visit. There is a development plan for the home that the manager reviews, updating as necessary, each month. The provider ensures that the home is subject to external monitoring visits to report on the conduct of the home. The manager addresses matters raised in those reports. The manager also reviews the required range of records, together with additional records, in order to assess the quality of provision and identify actions for improvement. These factors mean that young people benefit from a commitment to continual improvement.

The home has introduced a number of new staff, such that five out of seventeen care staff are undergoing their induction and probation period. The manager deploys the newer staff to work alongside experienced staff. There are sufficient staff for young people to benefit from at least one-to-one staffing ratios.

The home's Statement of Purpose is clear. The home provides care to young people in line with its Statement of Purpose. However, the Statement of Purpose does not include the relevant experience of staff members. This does not have an adverse impact on young people. Staff receive appropriate training and supervision to carry out their roles within the home. This means young people receive care from a competent staff team.

As well as an appropriate Statement of Purpose the home provides a young person's guide to the home that properly reflects the Statement of Purpose. It also contains appropriate contact details about who young people can contact to raise any concerns. This means that young people have information against which they can compare the care they receive.

The home stores its records about young people securely. Apart from the records of disciplinary measures, the home's records are clear and up to date. The provider has introduced a 'blue book' system that uses data transcribed from other records. This enables managers and staff to monitor the frequency of specific events involving young people. This is an effective tool for identifying trends in young people's behaviour, so providing useful evidence for reviews of care plans and strategies. This means that young people benefit from care records that exceed minimum requirements, and that assist in understanding the young person's experiences.

Managers ensure that staff and accredited professionals carry out routine health and safety checks, tests and inspections regularly. The home is undergoing refurbishment and some redecoration currently. This indicates that young people experience an environment that is safe and properly maintained.

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.