

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Pete Hylton
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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 that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service 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**.

The home provides an adequate quality of care and young people are making good progress. Care plans are mostly well written although there is a lack of detail around some specific individual needs of young people. Risk and behaviour management is positive and young people are safe at the home.

Young people enjoy living at the home and have access to a range of enjoyable activities. The educational needs of young people are not fully met. Where young people do not attend school, there is a lack of routine and structure during the day.

Restraint recording is not always effective and sanctions are not always clear to young people or staff. Records about young people going missing from the home are not fully completed. The young person's guide is missing the telephone number for the Children's Rights Director. The physical environment is mostly well presented although there is some damage to a wall and door frame. The use of electronic door alarms, although noted in the Statement of Purpose, does not have a separate policy governing the use of these measures.

Leadership and management of the home are adequate. The home's development plan does not clearly show improvements and the views of young people are not fully embedded into developing or monitoring the service.

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
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, discipline or restraint in a children's home, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose which shall include - the date, time and location of, the use of the measure (Regulation 17B (3) (d))	15/06/2012
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, discipline or restraint in a children's home, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose which shall include - confirmation that the person authorised by the registered provider to make the record has spoken to the child concerned and the person using the measure about the use of the measure (Regulation 17B (3) (h))	15/06/2012
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, discipline or restraint in a children's home, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose which shall include - the signature of the person authorised by the registered provider to make the record (Regulation 17B (3) (i))	15/06/2012
18 (2001)	promote the educational achievement of children accommodated in a children's home, in particular by ensuring that - the routine of the home is organised so as to further children's participation in education, including regular attendance at school and participation in school activities of children of compulsory school age. (Regulation 18 (1) (b))	15/06/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure the wishes, feelings and views of children and those significant to them are taken into account in developing the home (NMS 1.7)
- ensure that children receive personalised care that promotes all aspects of their individual identity and are each treated as an individual rather than a member of a group (NMS 2.1)
- ensure that sanctions and rewards for behaviour are clear, reasonable and fair and are understood by all staff and children (NMS 3.8)
- ensure that written records kept by the home when a child goes missing, detail action taken by staff, the circumstances of the child's return, any reasons given

by the child for running away from the home, any action taken in the light of those reasons. This information is shared with the responsible authority and where appropriate, their parents (NMS 5.10)

- ensure that the home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well maintained and decorated. Avoidable hazards are removed as is consistent with a domestic setting. Risk reduction does not lead to an institutional feel (NMS 10.3)
- ensure that where specific measures, including electronic devices, are used to monitor children, there is a written policy that sets out how they should be used, how they promote the welfare of children, how children will be informed of their use, how legitimate privacy of children will be protected and how children will be protected from potential abuse of such measures (NMS 10.5)
- ensure that the guide includes a summary of what the home sets out to do for children, how they can find out their rights, how a child can contact their Independent Reviewing Officer, the Children's Rights Director and Ofsted, if they wish to raise a concern with inspectors, and how to secure access to an independent advocate (NMS 13.5)
- ensure that there is a written development plan, reviewed annually, for the future of the home, either identifying any planned changes in the operation or resources of the service, or confirming the continuation of the home's current operation and resource. (NMS 15.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are supported in maintaining contact with family and friends. The home supports young people in accessing visits and ensures that family relationships, where appropriate, are fully promoted. This means that young people are able to maintain links with those people who are important to them. This in turn, ensures that young people have a good sense of identity and belonging. Where young people express a desire to attend places of worship, they are encouraged to do so. This means that young people are able to follow and maintain their beliefs whilst living at the home.

Where young people are attending education, they are making good progress. Young people who have struggled to maintain educational placements in the past are now regularly attending. A teacher commented that a young person was: 'making good progress.' However, not all young people are actively involved in educational placements. This means that the educational needs of all young people are not fully promoted within the home.

Young people are encouraged to participate in regular activities both inside and outside of the home. Membership of local clubs and societies is actively promoted. Young people enjoy the activities provided and also make progress in developing and sustaining relationships with peers from the wider community. For example, the

home is situated near to a common ground and young people enjoy spending time with peers and playing a variety of games. This means that young people are developing positive friendships outside of the home and as such, are developing strong links with the local community.

Young people are encouraged to develop their independence in line with their age and ability. For example, young people are actively encouraged to plan and prepare meals. Furthermore, young people are encouraged to take responsibility for tidying their own bedrooms and also in helping with jobs around the home. Staff also share in these duties. This means that young people are developing good skills in understanding group living and working together positively. Young people are starting to build the necessary skills for adult life.

Quality of care

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

Young people and staff enjoy constructive relationships at the home. Young people benefit from an active staff team who are able to provide a stimulating and caring environment. A social worker commented that, 'the staff team are experienced and capable.'

Young people benefit from clear boundaries and are rewarded for positive behaviour. The use of an incentive system further enhances and promotes positive behaviour in the home. This means that young people are encouraged to demonstrate positive behaviour. Boundaries are clear and staff respond appropriately and positively to challenging behaviour from young people.

Young people help to choose menus and activities. However, opportunities to formally record these views are limited and records of key working sessions and young people's meetings are brief. It is not clear how young people contribute to these sessions as their views are not always recorded. Furthermore, there is a distinct lack of follow up to situations where young people have expressed concerns over their identity or emotions. Although young people are supported by a caring staff team, the lack of recorded evidence means that matters are not appropriately shared or reviewed. This, in turn, means that young people do not benefit from a staff team where their individual needs are thoroughly identified, assessed or met.

The home has a clear complaints policy and this is readily available to young people. The young person's guide contains telephone numbers and addresses for relevant support agencies. However, the telephone number for the Children's Rights Director is missing from this document. Young people are encouraged to access services of support. For example, young people benefit from detailed health plans and are actively supported in attending all medical appointments. Where young people present with specific medical needs, they are supported in accessing visits to and from specialist services. The staff team benefit from consultation with a therapist. This further enhances the interventions and knowledge of the staff team.

Young people are encouraged to share in their care planning process. Care plans are written in the first person and this helps to make the documents more accessible and readable by the young people. However, individual needs are not thoroughly identified or reflected in these care plans. This means that the diverse needs of young people are not accurately reflected or recorded. Therefore, the staff team are not able to provide consistent care to young people.

Relationships between staff, parents and carers are positive. Concerns are shared and young people benefit from a staff team who ensure that their parents and carers are involved in their care, where appropriate to do so. The staff team enjoy good relationships with education providers, social workers, police and other agencies. A teacher commented that they had: 'a good dialogue with the care staff.'

Where young people do not regularly attend school, the staff team do not actively promote educational attendance. Young people do not benefit from clear plans for when they are without an educational placement. This lack of structure means that young people are not developing a sense of routine. The home is working with relevant agencies to establish educational placements, however.

The staff team ensure that young people participate in purposeful leisure activities. Detailed activity plans give a broad range of evening activities including cinema trips, sports and youth clubs. Furthermore, the home enjoys positive relationships within the local community and this is reflected in the young people's participation in communal activities within the local area.

Medication arrangements are safe and effective. Where young people are prescribed medicine, the staff team ensure that this is securely held. Detailed written records ensure that all administering is accurately recorded. The home is appropriately located, designed and meets the needs of young people. The physical environment is generally well decorated and young people are able to personalise their rooms. Young people particularly enjoy spending time outside and they are supported in doing so.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people feel safe at the home and there are clear arrangements in place to promote safeguarding. Restraint is only used where absolutely necessary. However, restraint recording is not wholly effective. Some records are incomplete; dates, times, location and signatures are missing from records. Furthermore, the views of young people are not always sought following restraint. Where sanctions are used, they are appropriate and fair. However, some records are not clear with respect to reparation timescales and amounts to be paid. This means that sanctions are not always understood by young people or the staff.

The behaviour of young people is well managed. Clear and detailed risk assessment and behaviour management plans are in place for all young people. This means that

all staff are aware of the particular vulnerabilities of all young people. Where young people go missing from the home, clear and effective protocols with the police ensure that young people are returned safely and quickly. However, the recording of incidents where young people go missing is not effective. Records are incomplete and do not show how the home has learned from these incidents, circumstances of the young person's return or reasons for the young person going missing. There is some evidence to suggest that the frequency of incidents where young people go missing from the home is reducing.

Staff are suitably vetted prior to employment within the home. This ensures that only suitable adults are allowed to work with young people. The home has a robust procedure in monitoring visitors to the home. This means that young people are further protected from contact with people who may pose a risk to them. The physical environment is appropriately secure. The use of bedroom door alarms enhances the safety of young people by alerting staff to situations where young people may be leaving their rooms during the night. However, there is no written policy in place which governs the use of such measures.

Relationships between young people are carefully monitored to ensure bullying does not happen in the home. The staff team are proactive in dealing with any tensions and young people are supported to resolve their differences amicably. This contributes to a pleasant environment where respect and tolerance are promoted. Where young people do express concerns, these are swiftly and appropriately acted upon and detailed records are kept of discussions and actions taken. Furthermore, where matters need referring to safeguarding or Ofsted, the home ensures that these notifications are sent without delay.

Leadership and management

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

The manager has improved the physical environment. There has been recent redecoration and new carpets have been fitted. However, the satellite house has some damage to the interior; an upstairs wall and door frame are in need of repair. Furthermore, there is a lack of personalisation in the communal living areas of the home. Pictures have been removed and not replaced and the physical environment is untidy in places.

The home has a written development plan. However, this document does not clearly state how the home will improve or continue its operation. The document serves only to monitor standards and practice. This means that the manager has no targets for developing the service. Furthermore, the manager has not sought the views of young people. This was a recommendation at the last inspection and therefore has been repeated.

The home has made some progress since the last inspection. The requirement made at the last inspection is being addressed. This inspection occurred within the timescales of the previous inspection's requirement. The deputy manager and

operations manager confirm that the views of young people are going to be embedded into future monitoring reports used by the home. The operations manager and deputy manager have a good awareness of the home's strengths and weaknesses.

The Statement of Purpose is clear, comprehensive and up to date. All required information is contained in this document and the home is meeting its aims and objectives. The home is adequately resourced to meet the needs of the young people. The operations manager for the organisation confirms that the home has sufficient financial resources to meet the needs of young people. The home is regularly monitored by managers from within the organisation. This ensures that a range of matters are regularly checked and the quality of care in the home is analysed.

The manager ensures that staff are aware and sensitive to the individual needs of young people. This is promoted through themed evenings in the home. The manager also promotes exploration of young people's backgrounds and cultural needs through regular theme nights and occasions that celebrate religious and cultural events.

Health and safety matters are routinely checked and monitored. All electrical and gas checks are up to date. This means that the environment is appropriately monitored and is safe for the young people. Staffing rotas are well planned and ensure that both sites have adequate cover at all times. The training needs of staff are identified and met through regular supervision. Staff confirm that they are able to access training when required. Furthermore, the home has a clear system for ensuring that training is refreshed. This means that the staff team are fully up to date with restraint, food hygiene and first aid training, amongst others. A member of staff commented that their 'training needs are met.'

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.