

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Denise Jolly
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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

The children's home is run by a charity and provides accommodation for up to two young people on a medium- or long-term basis.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people settle well into the home and benefit from good relationships with staff who are motivated to deliver child-centred practice. They experience improved outcomes across health and education. Young people's sense of belonging and identity is reinforced through the maintenance of good contact arrangements with their families.

Staffing arrangements are adequate to meet the needs of young people, but temporary transfers of staffing have impacted on young people's quality of care. Behaviour support plans offer positive reinforcement. However, the rewards systems are not supported by written programmes, and this creates inconsistency for young people. Individual restraints are used for appropriate reasons, but insufficient attention is paid to the health needs of young people arising from physical restraint, which places their health at risk.

The auditing and quality assurance systems are not robust enough to ensure quality performance in all areas, for example in the supervision of staff and representation of young people's views. Not all requirements and recommendations from the last inspection have been satisfactorily addressed. Absence of an up-to-date development plan also limits opportunities to drive forward improvement for the benefit of young people.

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)	include in the Statement of Purpose all matters listed in Schedule 1; in particular paragraph 5 of that Schedule (Regulation 4 (1))	30/12/2011
25	ensure that the employment of any persons on a temporary	30/12/2011

(2001)	basis at the children's home will not prevent children from receiving such continuity of care as is reasonable to meet their needs (Regulation 25(2))	
34 (2001)	ensure the registered person shall establish and maintain a system for improving the quality of care provided in the children's home (Regulation 34 (1)(b))	30/01/2012
2000	ensure on appointment of an individual to manage a children's home, that they provide information and documents in an application for registration. (Care Standards Act 2000 (Registration) (England) Regulations 2010 Part 2, Regulation 3)	30/01/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure sanctions and rewards for behaviour are clear, reasonable and fair and are understood by all staff and children (NMS 3.8)
- ensure 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 each child's Placement Plan is monitored by a key worker within the home who ensures that the requirements of the plan are implemented in the day-to-day care of that child in particular regard to medical conditions, and in updates for changes to plans (NMS 25.2)
- ensure where there has been physical restraint, children's homes must be able to call on medical assistance as required in particular regard to staff monitoring known health risks (NMS 3.16)
- ensure children's health is promoted in accordance with their placement plan and staff are clear about what responsibilities and decisions are delegated to them and where consent for medical treatment needs to be obtained (NMS 6.5)
- ensure there is a good quality learning and development programme which staff are supported to undertake, so that staff are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of the children and the purpose of the setting, in particular regard to identified health needs (NMS 18.1)
- ensure the registered person has 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 **satisfactory**.

Young people experience improved life chances and outcomes during their time at the home. They are developing an awareness of themselves and improving in emotional resilience. They make steady progress towards less anxious and chaotic lives. For example, destructive or aggressive behaviour has reduced as social interaction has improved. Staff make reasonable preparations to enable young people to grow in confidence and self-expression.

Young people have generally good physical health and are registered with all relevant services. Any medication is appropriately managed and staff work alongside parents to support young people at health appointments. Young people also receive specialist support from services such as child and adolescent mental health services and the organisation's clinical psychologist. This ensures their health and development needs are addressed in a timely manner. Young people with additional medical or developmental needs are adequately supported by interested and encouraging staff. However, training has not been provided for staff in specific areas related to their diagnosis.

Young people enjoy a balanced range of appropriate activities, making good use of local sport and leisure amenities, supported at all times in the community by staff. There are opportunities within the home for young people to engage in domestic activity according to their level of ability. This includes contributing to healthy menu planning, helping to shop, and preparing meals. Young people are proud of the vegetables they grow and then eat. One young person has responsibility for a pet rabbit which he says staff helped him to buy. This provides for steady progression towards the development of independence skills.

Young people benefit from regular attendance at school which helps to improve educational attainment according to their starting point.

Young people have appropriate and positive contact with their families, including visits to their family home which are well supported by staff. Families say they are welcome at the home and can visit any time. This enables relationships with siblings to be maintained and developed, and reinforces young people's sense of belonging and identity.

Quality of care

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

Young people demonstrate confidence in their relationships with staff. Parents and social workers say that relationships in the home are good. Staff offer sufficient opportunities for young people to express their needs and wishes; for example, activity plans record the preferences of young people and rooms are decorated according to personal taste.

While there is no formal house meeting, young people's views are recorded in a consultation book and shared with staff. Some young people in the home have

learning difficulties and this allows young people to express their ideas when they find formal meetings difficult, and ensures that their views are taken into account in day-to-day activities. Staff are motivated to find ways of improving reliable communication with the young people in the home, so that young people with complex needs can be better understood and supported to develop independence. Some day-to-day written information for young people is supplemented by hand drawn pictures to increase understanding for the young people.

Key workers develop person centred plans from individual young person's placement plans. These contain most of the necessary information for providing good quality care, including the views of parents and social workers. However they do not, for example contain any detailed information about a specific medical condition and how this impacts on the young person and their behaviour. Consent for homely remedies was missing from one file. Plans have been reviewed, and they are shared with staff in team meetings. However, the changing needs of young people are not reflected in current care plans, and this means that young people's personal development is not supported consistently.

Young people are helped to access specialist health services when necessary, and are encouraged by staff to participate in programmes developed by, for example, a clinical psychologist. This improves their emotional and psychological well-being as well as their physical health.

Social workers say the home has good connections with school. Young people's education is well supported by the home. Staff work with schools to extend learning beyond the school day, for example, sexual health development. Young people participate in and experience a range of fun and educational opportunities which generally improve their social and life skills.

Young people live in a home which is appropriately located in a residential area close to local amenities. It is furnished to a satisfactory standard with improvements under way for the garden area. Young people are pleased to have been involved in the garden design and are participating in tasks towards completion of the project. This is helping them to accept responsibility and work as part of a team.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people indicate they are happy and secure in the home. The home protects young people by a range of safeguarding measures such as well- established systems to deal with any child protection issues. Staff are aware of their responsibilities to safeguard children and know how to respond to any allegation or concern. Appropriate training is accessed to keep their skills and knowledge up to date. Although young people do not currently go missing from the home, there is a recently updated protocol for liaison with the police should the need arise.

Young people structure their time positively, and enjoy sufficient staffing levels which help them to achieve their plans while keeping them safe. Although incidents are reducing, the needs of young people mean that at times their behaviour places themselves or others at risk, and restraint is used to maintain the safety of staff and young people. While staff are suitably trained in this approach, and records are completed according to requirements, some individual needs identified within a behaviour plan are not transferred to the record of restraint. This means that the health of a young person may be compromised as there is no record of any physical reaction to the restraint, or a judgement made regarding whether medical follow up is necessary.

Staff reward young people for positive behaviour both within the general running of the home, and through specific approaches for individual young people. However, some reward schemes are not reflected in an individual care plan, or have written guidance for staff. Young people are not fully aware of the structure of the reward system and are confused by inconsistencies in staff delivery. This means young people do not understand what they have to do in order to gain rewards.

New members of staff, including relief staff, are recruited through procedures overseen by the parent organisation, and records are held centrally. The manager said she is informed of an individual's suitability to work within the home before they take up post. The manager conducts environmental risk assessments, and requests maintenance work to ensure the home is physically safe.

Leadership and management

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

Young people receive care and accommodation provided by the home in line with its Statement of Purpose. The manager has yet to submit an application to be registered, and their details are not yet contained in the staffing list in the Statement of Purpose.

Staffing has recently stabilised, and supervision is adequate to meet the identified needs of the young people. While motivated and enthusiastic, specialised training is required in order for staff to better meet the needs of individual young people, and this has been requested by the manager. Regularity of supervision has improved; however, the record of supervision does not provide all recommended information or adequately record the progress of probationary staff.

Young people have expressed concern that the predictability of the staff team can be disrupted because they provide cover at other homes in the organisation at short notice. Young people do not understand the reason for this, and say it makes them anxious. This in turn increases negative behaviours as young people are managed by relief staff who cannot provide the consistency of approach necessary to maintain positive outcomes. Senior management discussion has failed to resolve this issue which was recognised during the last inspection, and the manager is looking at ways to best support the young people during team changes.

Some progress has been made since the last inspection. Young people are now protected by accurate and up-to-date records of control. Young people are supported to manage their behaviour by staff, who monitor and record any patterns, in order that young people can develop. They live in a home furnished suitably and comfortably to their needs. Health of young people is better supported by written health plans, although shortfalls remain in lack of specialist information. This means that young people may not have all their health needs met. However, two requirements and one recommendation made at the last inspection have not been met. Young people do not have the security of a Registered Manager, or specifically identified staff for the home. The lack of required information in the home's Statement of Purpose, and the temporary transfer of staff means that young people continue to experience inconsistency of care.

The newly-appointed manager is constructing a new development plan, using monitoring provided by the Regulation 33 visitor and their own monthly monitoring. Views of young people are collected on an informal basis only. Some of the systems used to oversee performance are themselves inaccurate. For example, a file check recorded all required information was present, when there was a statement of special educational need absent. As a result, there are gaps in accurate information regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the home. This prevents the young people from being supported in a consistent and effective manner, and having their views represented fully in the running of the home.

Equality and diversity practice is **satisfactory**.