

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	05/01/2012
Inspector	Stella Lovie
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	27/05/2011
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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 progress made by the provider since the last full inspection, identifies any further strengths, any areas for improvement and makes judgements as outlined in the *Inspection of children's homes – framework for inspection (March 2011)*.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Good progress	The children's home has demonstrated continued improvement in quality of care and outcomes for children and young people and where appropriate has addressed all requirements and the large majority of recommendations that were raised at the previous inspection.
Satisfactory progress	The children's home has maintained quality of care and outcomes for children and young people and where appropriate has addressed all requirements and the majority of recommendations that were raised at the previous inspection.
Inadequate progress	The children's home has failed to address one or more requirements and/or has not met the majority of recommendations and/or the quality of care and outcomes for children and young people have declined since the last full inspection.

Service information

Brief description of the service

This independent home provides care and accommodation for six children and young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The service provides medium to long-term placements for children and young people of either gender.

Progress

Since their previous inspection the service is judged to be making **inadequate** progress.

The home received a satisfactory judgement at the last full inspection in May 2011. However, in the interim period it has failed to address sufficiently the requirement to ensure that the consistency of the staff team is conducive to the provision of a reasonable continuity of care. Children and young people's needs have been inconsistently met by a staff team that has continued to be supplemented by relief and agency staff. This means that for some children and young people's planned work has not been progressed, with consequent delay in their care planning.

Staff absence has been particularly high on occasion, and managers have been working shifts in order to ensure adequate staff cover. This impacts negatively on the overall quality of care received by the children and young people as staff supervisions and appraisals have had to be deferred. It means that the professional development and practices of staff are not being properly managed and adequately monitored.

Although managers have started to obtain feedback from children and young people, relatives and placing authorities as part of their quality assurance processes, there are no systematic arrangements in place yet to use this information to improve the quality of care. The monthly independent visiting is generally thorough and endeavours to obtain the views of the children and young people. However, it does not include interviews with staff on a regular basis. This means that issues around staff morale, staff absence and associated inconsistencies in the care of the children and young people are not being addressed effectively through this mechanism.

The staff team is adequately trained to meet the children and young people's general care needs. However, not all the care staff have attained a minimum level 3 qualification, and some staff lack confidence and skills in direct work with children and young people about their wishes and feelings. This restricts some staff members in their contribution to provision of service.

A further area of concern is in relation to feedback from some of the children and young people that they feel unsafe because of bullying. While staff attempt to address the known bullying in the children and young people's group, some young

people feel that bullying behaviour goes on that the staff do not see.

It is also concerning that there is not always a robust follow through in respect of allegations made against staff. This means that arrangements for the protection of children could be deficient. Additionally, children and young people are not always informed formally of the outcome of any allegations that they make. This has potential to compromise their trust of adults in the future.

Recording in relation to physical restraints has improved with clear sequential numbering and detailed accounts of the circumstances of each incident. These are helpful in judging the efficacy of the intervention and in the analysis of patterns and trends in order to reduce the need for restraint. However, the records do not routinely include the children and young people's views about the restraint, and do not clearly show that they are offered the opportunity to be medically examined.

It is clear that children and young people's views are listened to in the regular house meetings. As a result of their requests for improved furnishings and décor in the house, the children and young people have been involved in the choice and purchase of new ornaments and furniture. They also have helped with the re-decoration of the downstairs living areas. This promotes their sense of ownership and belonging in the home. It has significantly improved the homeliness of the environment since the last inspection. The children and young people also benefit from a very well equipped play room that promotes opportunities for nurturing and direct play.

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
25 (2001)	ensure that the employment of any persons on a temporary 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))	05/04/2012
27 (2001)	ensure that all persons employed receive appropriate training, supervision and appraisal, and are enabled from time to time to obtain further qualifications appropriate to the work they perform (Regulation 27 (4) (a) (b))	05/04/2012
33 (2001)	ensure that the person carrying out the monitoring visit shall interview, with their consent and in private, such persons working at the home as appears necessary in order to form an opinion of the standard of care provided in the home. (Regulation 33 (4) (a))	05/04/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure that children receive prompt feedback on any concerns or complaints raised and are kept informed of progress (NMS 1.6)
- ensure that children do not identify bullying as a problem at the home. Staff and children understand bullying is unacceptable. 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 that where there has been physical restraint, children are always given the opportunity to be examined by a registered nurse or medical practitioner (NMS 3.16)
- ensure that where restraint is used, children are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records kept by the home (NMS 3.18)
- ensure that all existing care staff have attained a minimum level 3 qualification. All new staff engaged from the commencement of the NMS in April 2011 are to hold the level 3 Children & Young People's Workforce Diploma which must include mandatory social care units; or be working towards the Diploma within 6 months of confirmation of employment (NMS 18.5)
- ensure that a clear and comprehensive summary of any allegations made against a particular member of staff, including details of how the allegation was followed up and resolved, a record of any action taken and the decisions reached, is kept on the person's confidential file. (NMS 20.7)