

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	16/05/2012
Inspector	Stella Lovie
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

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Service information

Brief description of the service

This independent home provides care and accommodation for up to 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.

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 promotes good outcomes for some children and young people but has been unable to achieve this for all of the children and young people in recent months. This is linked to some children and young people's high level of risk-taking behaviour that the home has been unable to address effectively.

However, the children and young people receive a good quality of care and report positive views about their relationships with staff. They say that they feel safe in this home and that staff care about their welfare. There are, though, continuing challenges for staff to improve and sustain a recent reduction in the use of restraint and the number of times children and young people go missing. There are also areas of development for staff in the management of child-to-child abuse and in the recording of incidents of bullying.

The Registered Manager has a strong grasp of the improvement agenda in this home and has made great progress since the last inspection. There are no current breaches of regulation or failures to meet national minimum standards that significantly impact in a negative way on the welfare of children and young people.

Further areas for development include a clarification in the Statement of Purpose about the home's provision of a therapeutic environment; a closer attention to confidentiality in the Regulation 33 reports, and a more robust implementation of the home's equality and diversity action plan so that it is central to all aspects of staff's practice with children and 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
16 (2001)	ensure that consideration is given to the measures which may be necessary to protect children in the children's home following an allegation of abuse, with particular regard to child to child abuse. (Regulation 16 (2) (e))	12/07/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure that there is an environment and culture to promote models and support positive behaviour that all staff understand and implement consistently (NMS 3.2)
- ensure that staff in the home are trained to recognise and deal with any indications or incidents of bullying, with particular regard to recognition and recording of bullying incidents (NMS 3.12)
- ensure the care and support provided to children minimises the risk that they will go missing (NMS 5.1)
- ensure that children's physical and emotional and social development needs are promoted, with particular regard to reducing the use of fast foods and sweets as rewards for positive behaviour (NMS 6.1)
- ensure that the Statement of Purpose shows how the service will meet outcomes for children, with particular regard to provision of a therapeutic environment (NMS 13.2)
- ensure that information about individual children is kept confidential, with particular regard to not writing children's full names in Regulation 33 reports (NMS 22.3)
- ensure that staff support children's social and emotional development and that full attention is paid to individual children's gender, faith, ethnic origin, cultural and linguistic background, sexual orientation and any disability they might have, making this central to and integrated into every aspect of care, support and daily life. (NMS 2.2, Volume 5, statutory guidance, para 2.35)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

The picture of outcomes for children and young people in this home is mixed. Some children and young people are making very good progress in the development of their emotional literacy and self-esteem. This is evident in their regular attendance at school and in their improvements in educational attainment from their starting points. These children and young people are also enjoying very positive engagement with the wider community. This is helping further with their development of social skills and awareness of diversity in their local environment.

However, some children and young people have not been sufficiently helped by staff to address risk-taking activities and challenging behaviours. As a consequence, those children and young people have not been able to make progress in their emotional and social development, with subsequent adverse impact on their educational attendance and attainment. As a result, some children and young people have needed to move to alternative provision.

All of the children and young people benefit from constructive and appropriate contact with family, friends and other people who are important to them. The home is imaginative in making the arrangements for this contact. This enables children and young people to sustain continuity of relationships and ensures that attachments are respected, sustained and developed.

Some children and young people have made successful transitions into independent living. This has been facilitated by careful preparation with staff and on-going outreach work.

All of the children and young people have been supported and enabled to share their wishes and feelings in accordance with their age and ability. This has helped them to make choices for themselves and to learn from their mistakes.

Quality of care

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

Children and young people in this home enjoy positive and constructive relationships with the staff. As one young person comments: 'All the staff look after me really well. I've been getting more good. I feel safe here and never get bullied. I score this home 10 out of 10.'

Staff provide good support to children and young people to enable them to attend school regularly and make educational progress. There is robust home to school communication, and children and young people are encouraged to do their homework and are helped by staff to improve their numeracy and literacy skills. For example, staff listen to children and young people reading and promote their involvement with the local library.

Children and young people are encouraged actively to express their views. Good use is made of a range of tools for helping them to voice their opinions and have a real

say in how the home is run. For example, children and young people have chosen furniture and colour schemes for refurbishment of the home, and have been involved in the painting and decorating. This promotes their sense of self-worth and develops practical skills in home management. It encourages them to have pride in their environment. As a result, there is a lot less damage to the fabric of the building.

Children and young people are clear that they know how to make a complaint and have confidence that it will be taken seriously. They have easy access to a private telephone and information about relevant external agencies that could help them. Consequently, children and young people are genuinely able to raise concerns and make suggestions for changes and improvements. It means that staff are seeing the situation from the children and young people's perspective and are taking meaningful account of their views.

Children and young people have highly individualised placement plans that they contribute towards on a regular basis. They are successfully encouraged to attend and participate in their reviews. This means that children and young people have a good understanding about why they are in the home and their plans for the future. This helps them to engage with the work that is being done with them in respect of behavioural and emotional issues. As a relative says: 'They have achieved a good turn-around in his behaviour. He's calmer now, more compliant, gets on better with adults, is happier in himself and appreciates things now. Before, he would ruin and break things but he's more responsible now. His keyworker works with him as though he was one of his own children, as though he really cares.'

Children and young people have ready access to a range of specialist services in accordance with their need. This ensures that interventions are personalised to each child and young person.

Staff help the children and young people experience a wide range of purposeful and enjoyable activities. As a result, they try new activities and can make choices about their social lives.

Staff promote healthy eating in general but they somewhat undermine this with the provision of fast food and sweets as rewards for positive behaviour.

Children and young people are encouraged to have tolerance and respect for each other. This has been a particular challenge in some of the peer relationships, and staff have worked creatively to address associated issues of bullying. The home has developed a range of strategies to help promote children and young people's understanding of equality and diversity issues. However, some of these strategies are not yet an integral part of children and young people's daily living.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

There is a mixed picture in this home in relation to safeguarding. Since the last

inspection, there are clear improvements in the intervention and management of bullying. Staff have developed a range of tools for direct work with children and young people both on an individual basis and as a group. This has been successful in helping them to gain a better understanding of their impact on each other, and take responsibility for their actions. As a result, there have been some improvements in how the children and young people get on with each other. It is still the case though, that some incidents of bullying are not being recorded as such. This means that the manager is not able to monitor trends effectively.

Children and young people report that they feel safe in the home and that they have staff they can talk to if they are worried about anything. Staff respond quickly where there are concerns about possible abuse, and involve placing authorities and other agencies as appropriate. However, there are indications that the Registered Manager and her staff are not fully aware of all the safeguarding issues that need to be considered in the management of child-to-child abuse situations. As a result, some children and young people's safeguarding needs may not have been met as thoroughly as they should have been.

The home has sound arrangements in respect of children and young people who go missing. However, the incidence of going missing, with associated anti-social behaviour, is quite high. Staff have been unable to effectively address this behaviour with some children and young people. As a result, some children and young people's risk-taking behaviour has had a negative impact on their social and emotional progress. It is clear though, that staff try to take steps to ensure children and young people's safety when they go missing, and try to understand triggers for their behaviour. There are also appropriate arrangements with the local police and other agencies to support effective action when children and young people go missing.

Rewards and sanctions for how children and young people behave are clear, reasonable and fair. While they are understood by all staff and children and young people, those positive behaviour strategies are not always applied consistently by staff. There have been occasions, since the last inspection, when the use of physical interventions has been high. This is linked with quite a high rate of staff injuries and some injuries to children and young people. There is a recent reduction in the use of restraint and of children and young people going missing.

Staff are generally pro-active in recognising the particular vulnerabilities relating to the diverse needs of the children and young people in their care. Interventions are usually creative, thoughtful and underpinned by clear risk assessments. Other measures such as the robust and thorough vetting of new staff also ensure that children and young people are adequately safeguarded.

Leadership and management

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

The Registered Manager provides good leadership and has an inclusive open style which most staff value and reflect in their practice with children and young people.

For example, the manager ensures that each incident of challenging behaviour is examined so that trends and issues are identified. These are then used in reflection with both staff and children and young people to learn lessons and inform future practice. This helps children and young people to understand consequences and practise empathy.

The Registered Manager has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home, learns from monitoring and inspection activities and improves practice accordingly. Currently, she is robustly challenging any areas of poor practice in line with her commitment to her improvement agenda. In the short term, this means that the staff group is going through a period of change while she tries to establish a collaborative and consistent team way of working. The aim is to achieve greater consistency in staff practice with the children and young people. As a consequence, since the last inspection, all the requirements and recommendations have been addressed and mostly resolved.

A written development plan to which all staff have contributed is in place with realistic targets. This will enable children and young people to continue to enjoy a good quality of care, while paying attention to the necessary improvements needed to raise their progress overall and ensure that the recent reduction in risk-taking behaviours is sustained. As part of that improvement agenda, all staff have taken ownership of various responsibilities. This promotes their ability to practise independently and confidently, with consequent positive role modelling for the children and young people.

The home employs a sufficient number of staff who are well trained and receive regular good supervision and appraisal. This means that the professional development and practices of staff are being effectively managed and has a positive impact on the quality of care that children and young people receive.

Record keeping is a particular strength of this home. Children and young people's records are clear, well written and up to date. They provide a thorough account of children and young people's lives, experiences and plans for the future. This will help them to understand the story of their time in the home if they want to access their records at a later stage in their lives.

While the provider overall meets the aims and objectives in the Statement of Purpose, it is not entirely clear to placing authorities what the provision of a therapeutic approach actually amounts to in practice.

The home undertakes rigorous quality assurance with a clear positive impact on the quality of care provided to children and young people. The Regulation 33 reports make a strong contribution to this, though they occasionally compromise children and young people's confidentiality by recording their full names.

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.