

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Karen Forster
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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

This independent home provides care and accommodation for six young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties, aged from 10 to 17 years. The service provides medium to long-term placements for young people of either gender.

Overall effectiveness

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

The home promotes satisfactory outcomes for young people with some evidence of improving outcomes. While there are gaps in pre-placement planning, once in placement, established individual placement plans are followed well to provide a satisfactory quality of care.

Most young people have positive views about the quality of their care in the home and readily identify areas for improvement, which includes the quality of the living environment. Young people know who their key workers are and mostly find key work time helpful. They feel that staff care about their welfare and are interested in how they spend their time in the home.

There are challenging incidents occurring within the home that are adequately contained by staff and young people. While this means that, on occasions, young people feel stressed and worried, they say that they feel safe in the home. The staff group's move towards more pro-active risk management strategies is beginning to improve the level of safety for young people and staff in the home.

Areas for development include care planning for young people; the clarity and overview of restraint records; the consistency of staffing and the depth and use of quality assurance procedures. Young people do not have consistent access to a young people's telephone within the home.

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
11	ensure that the children's home is conducted so as to promote	31/07/2011

(2001)	and make proper provision for the welfare of children accommodated there. This is with specific reference to ensuring there are clear procedures for the introduction of young people to the home (Regulation 11)	
28 (2001)	maintain in respect of each child who is accommodated in the home a record in permanent form which includes the information specified in Schedule 3, especially the date and circumstances of any measures of control, restraint or discipline used on the child (Regulation 28)	31/07/2011
34 (2001)	establish and maintain a system for improving the quality of care provided in the children's home, this system must provide for consultation with young people, their parents and placing authorities (Regulation 34)	31/07/2011
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))	03/09/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure that each child's placement plan is monitored by a key worker who ensures that the requirements of the plan are implemented in the day-to-care of the child, especially in relation to the provision of liquid medication where requested (NMS 25.2)
- ensure that children understand, within their level of understanding, and care staff are aware of, the purpose and content of individual placement plans, especially in relation to the length of placement, risk management strategies and any move on plans (NMS 25.1)
- ensure that the home provides a comfortable and homely environment which is well decorated and maintained (NMS 10.3)
- ensure that children have access to facilities such as a private phone line at reasonable times (2.11- Children Act 1989, Guidance and Regulations. Volume 5:Children's Homes)
- ensure that records of all measures of control, discipline or restraint are carefully recorded and each account is sequentially numbered. (2.91- Children Act 1989, Guidance and Regulations. Volume 5:Children's Homes)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make satisfactory progress in developing their self-esteem as they receive warm and responsive care from staff. Their health needs are met well through routine assessment of their needs and ensuring that issues are addressed. For example, if they find managing their anger difficult, services are provided to help them manage anger in a more appropriate way. Current health plans reflect most of the young people's wishes and feelings in relation to their health care. However, some personal preferences, such as the use of liquid medication, are not clearly accounted for or implemented in practice.

The home works hard to capture educational progress and celebrates achievement, which promotes young people's motivation to achieve further. Individuals consistently access tailored educational services within the community. They enjoy consistent support throughout the school and extended day, as care staff routinely communicate with school to monitor progress.

Young people receive suitable care which helps them to prepare for adulthood. Although young people are warmly welcomed by staff into the home upon first arrival, they do not all arrive into the home in a planned and appropriate manner. This means that some individuals feel less in control of their home moves.

Quality of care

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

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Young people benefit from the staff group's well developed understanding and sensitive approach to their individual needs. Individuals make good use of open dialogue with carers to explore their current and historical risk taking behaviour, which means that they are able to explore their heritage without stigma.

Young people know how to obtain support to make complaints. When they exercise this right the home responds suitably and records the progress with some updates provided for the young person. There is a suitable level of detail within most young people's placement plans, and this information is known and implemented by carers. However, in isolated cases, there are shortfalls in the pre-placement planning process used by the home, which means that new young people are not well informed about the plans for their placement. Consequently, young people, their carers and families are unclear regarding the placement's immediate care objectives.

Young people live in a healthy environment where their physical, emotional and psychological health is reasonably well promoted and, in the main, they are able to access the most suitable services to meet their health needs. The home's arrangements for the storage and administration of medication are safe and effective, which means that, if required, young people receive their medication in line with their prescription.

Young people are well supported to attend school and do so regularly. Staff positively support young people to engage in leisure activities both within and outside the home, which means that young people are able to enjoy their own interests and develop confidence in their personal skills.

Young people live in a frequently damaged home, while damage is promptly attended to, the damage means that some fittings are temporarily out of use and not always accessible. Individuals can see their visitors in private within the home. The home's equipment to support regular out-going contact has some minor shortfalls, in that the young people's designated telephone is not consistently available; although young people do have ready access to e-mail communications. While young people exercise personal choice towards the décor within their own rooms, the level of furnishing and quality of fittings are basic.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

There are challenging occurrences within the home that are adequately contained by staff and young people. While this means that on occasions young people feel stressed and worried, they advise that they feel safe in the home. The staff group has moved towards more pro-active risk management strategies. This is beginning to provide a suitable level of safety, from physical challenges and bullying, for young people and staff in the home.

The home's procedures for incidences where young people go missing from the home include a suitable protocol with the local police. This means that missing young people would generate a search by home staff and local police, in line with the vulnerabilities of the group. Staff are trained in non-aversive restraint techniques and apply these strategies, when only really necessary. However, there are missing restraint records, and the numbering system on the remaining reports is not sequential. This makes restraint recording inconsistent and impedes the review of these accounts by young people and staff.

The home maintains satisfactory checks on prospective staff, which are clearly recorded. This means that young people are cared for by suitably cleared staff. The home suitably manages any allegations and involves statutory agencies appropriately, to help protect young people from harm.

The home environment is kept safe which promotes the safety of young people and staff. The needs and characteristics of the resident young people are satisfactorily addressed through clear risk assessments for most young people. Although, the risk assessment for the newest young person is incomplete and this reduces the level of risk management strategies available to the staff.

Leadership and management

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

The home has made suitable progress in addressing one of the two recommendations made at the last inspection. The home's safeguarding procedures now include support for the individual who is the subject of the investigation. The second recommendation, relating to continuity of staffing, has not been suitably addressed. Consequently this is an area for development following this inspection.

The home's Statement of Purpose clearly describes the nature of the service. Young people and stakeholders are clear about the aims and objectives of the home and what services it provides. The provider meets most of the aims and objectives within the Statement of Purpose, although consistency of staffing remains an area for development.

The provider monitors the home's care at regular and consistent intervals, providing suitable opportunities for young people to talk to senior staff about the quality of care they receive. The home is managed by personnel with appropriate skills and experience. The manager and senior staff maintain a close view of the care practice on some shifts, as they are operational in the rota caring for young people. However, their ability to monitor the efficiency and effectiveness of the care service has been impeded by their duties supporting the provision of direct care to young people. This means that the internal quality monitoring reports are not consistently capturing the personal experience of young people, or the feedback from stakeholders.

There is, in the main, a sufficient number of staff to care for young people. This is achieved through the use of agency staff and staff from other homes within the company. This does reduce the consistency of care received by young people, as various different staff are working within the home. Both permanent and bank staff do receive sufficient training and information regarding new care initiatives. This enables them to provide satisfactory care for young people.

Young people's records are organised into two files within their house. These records include most of the historical documents and some of the current documents, which help their carers to provide a suitable level of care. There is a shortfall within the records of restraints and risk assessments that has already been reported upon.

The Registered Manager notifies the relevant agencies of significant incidents within the home, this includes Ofsted and the safeguarding teams from the local and home authorities. This means that information relating to young people's safety is shared by the home with the relevant authorities and agencies, to help protect individuals from abuse.

Equality and diversity practice is **satisfactory**.