

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Gavin Thomas
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is registered to accommodate four young males. The home is privately owned and is one of three children's homes owned by the service providers.

The home provides a service to young men who may display emotional and behavioural difficulties and whose assessed needs include sexually inappropriate behaviour. All young people see a therapist weekly and attend therapeutic groups as part of the homes assessment and treatment programme. Young people go to the organisation's school if they are not in college or work experience.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service of high quality 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 **good**.

Young people are thriving in this home and making remarkable progress, particularly in relation to: their emotional well-being, safety, restoring positive relationships with families and gaining independence. The effectiveness of therapeutic and other forms of intervention provides a strong basis for young people to progress to this home from the other two homes owned by the registered provider.

Young people indicated through their surveys and discussions that they cannot fault this home. One young person said 'I have tried to find fault with this home but there is nothing.' Young people cooperate fully with the balance between restricted and free time and how this fits with their care plans and ability to cope in different situations. More often than not, young people highlight how much they feel safe and comfortable with staff support. However, they understand the benefits of 'earning' and using their free time constructively as this also helps influence their required levels of support.

Outcomes for young people and the quality of care are outstanding in all areas. Young people are of the opinion that this service is 'the best' because the daily structures and staffs' attitudes help them (young people) to achieve their goals.

There are many aspects of outstanding practice under the outcome areas 'safeguarding children and young people' and 'leadership and management'. However, some work is required in ensuring that all regulations are fully met such as seeking formal consent from placing authorities regarding the use of door alarms. The vast majority of recommendations identified are in relation to developing quality assurance and control systems. This is in particular to: improving the quality of statutory records, developing business planning and monitoring systems and ensuring that policies and procedures are fully compliant with statutory guidance and the operation of 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
22 (2001)	ensure that each child's placing authority consents to the use of door alarms for safeguarding purposes (Regulation 22 - (1)(a))	31/08/2012
22 (2001)	ensure that each young person's care plan clearly specifies that the use of door alarms are used for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the young person concerned. (Regulation 22 - (1)(b))	31/08/2012

Recommendations

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

- review the 'missing from care' policy to ensure that it is compatible with and have regard to 'Runaway and Missing from Home and Care' protocols and procedures maintained and managed by the police or by the local authority for the area where the home is located (NMS 5.6)
- review the recording of restraints to ensure that the format used cannot be tampered with after the event (Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 5: Children's Homes paragraph 2.91)
- update the Statement of Purpose with more accurate details of permanent staff based at this home (NMS 13)
- keep the numbers of permanent staff under review to avoid continuity of young people's care being compromised when external agency staff are used (NMS

17.1)

- review current quality assurance and monitoring systems to include 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)
- review the current process following monthly monitoring visits to demonstrate any action taken by the registered provider to address any issues of concern identified and raised at the time of the visit. (NMS 21.9)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are engaged in well-managed therapeutic activities and meetings which are effective in addressing individual and group needs. The structure of therapy and other forms of support are tailored to young people's needs. Young people feel that they can speak to any member of staff about 'anything' and this they say helps them engage in therapy more effectively.

Young people refer to staff as their 'best friends' because relationships are built on openness, trust and respect. Young people feel that staff are great in knowing when to offer them support; particularly at times when they are feeling low. Appropriate action is taken in addressing young people's holistic health needs. Documentation relating to young people's health is comprehensive and used effectively for care planning purposes. This includes ongoing assessments undertaken by the therapist.

Extensive work is undertaken with young people in helping them understand and come to terms with the reasons for their placements. Young people accept and embrace the ways in which they are supported to work through trauma and past experiences. Although this is often challenging, the robustness of care planning and review, ensures that young people are feeling safe and making progress at a pace in which they are comfortable.

Young people are making exceptional progress with their education and learning opportunities including work experience and college placements. The registered provider's school is described by young people as 'awesome'. The main reason being is because therapy is provided alongside of academic learning. This, in young people's view, works extremely well in practice. The benefits of staff from this home being at the school on a daily basis also provides continuity of care and support at all times of the day.

The planning and monitoring of young people's independence training is meticulous. This includes robust risk management and the completion of a broad range of activities undertaken with young people. Young people speak very positively about 'free time' which is earned alongside of their independence training. This is a key incentive for allowing young people to put to good use, the skills and coping

strategies they acquire over a period of time.

Quality of care

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

Young people make comments such as 'Staff create a family atmosphere here' and 'It's like walking into open arms'. Young people describe their care as being outstanding because staff are vigilant in responding quickly to changes in their (young people's) behaviours. According to young people, this makes them feel very safe.

Therapy is very central to young people's care and support. This is a highly respected provision and young people relate extremely well to the different types of therapy. The types of therapy benefit young people in coming to terms with their past and helping them prepare for a more positive future. Equality is embedded in practice and young people's personal needs are carefully assessed prior to admission to this home. Young people stress the emphasis placed on equality and openness which in their experience, results in fairness for everyone. Consultation with young people is frequent. Young people take part in a broad range of group discussion groups about the running of the home. Individual support is enhanced through a very effective and well-established key worker system. However, young people enjoy interacting and liaising with all members of staff.

Young people say that that they just 'love' the house and everyone plays a part in keeping the house clean and homely. The two lounges provide space for young people to spend time alone or with others. The upkeep of the house and daily tasks are all linked with young people's plans for independence. These tasks are purposeful while providing the scope for young people to make constructive use of their time.

Young people make excellent use of community-based facilities and access to these provisions are risk assessed and meticulously planned with young people. The robustness of planning these activities helps ensure that young people are and feel safe in public areas.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are adamant that the daily structures and routines of this home keep them safe and make them feel safe. This feeling of 'safety' also helps young people focus positively on other support systems including therapy and working towards independence. Young people have no qualms about their privacy within the home and the use of mechanical monitoring systems such as door alarms gives young people the added reassurance of feeling safe. Procedural guidance is in place regarding the use of door alarms and this is known to young people and their placing authorities. However, there is no evidence confirming the placing authorities consent

to the use of door alarms for safeguarding purposes and young people's care plans also lack this clarity.

Young people confirm that bullying is not tolerated in this home. Young people feel protected and safe against any form of bullying behaviours. Triggers of unacceptable behaviours are discussed openly with young people in house meetings. This contributes towards a culture of openness which young people feel very strongly about. Young people rarely go missing and when they do, prompt action is taken for ensuring their safe return. The 'missing from care' policy clearly outlines the action to be taken but it does not clearly specify if these procedures are compatible with and have regard to the 'Runaway and Missing from Home and Care' protocols and procedures.

Behavioural management systems are very effective and young people know that they can rely on staff at any time to help them through challenging feelings and thoughts. This two-way process works extremely well in practice and, as a result, behavioural issues are often resolved amicably and quickly. The use of restraint is extremely rare and any form of physical intervention is only used as a very last resort. A restraint log is in place but a recent initiative has been introduced whereby any form of restraint is written on loose paper and glued into the restraint log. This now means that any entries into the restraint log are not tamper proof.

Risk management processes are robust and take into account a raft of activities young people are involved in. Young people's personal risk assessments are detailed and these are consistent with their care plans. Staff recruitment processes are thorough and clear evidence is provided on the vetting of new staff including the verification of references. Staff Criminal Records Bureau checks are routinely refreshed and this contributes to young people's safety and protection.

The general upkeep of the premises and the frequency of routine safety checks maximises young people's safety and security. The home is immaculate both inside and out. Young people enjoy the freedom and scope of helping to keep the home in such an excellent condition.

Leadership and management

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

A detailed Statement of Purpose is in place and includes all of the criteria required by regulation. However, the staffing structure is very general and does not clearly specify the actual staff based at this home permanently. For example, the staffing details include all staff including bank staff from other homes owned by the registered provider. Young people speak very positively about the usefulness of a guide written specifically for them.

Young people are supported by a small but very dedicated, experienced and committed staff team. A Registered Manager is in post but has other managerial responsibilities within the organisation. The acting manager, who is also part of the

staff team, is in charge of the day-to-day running of the home. He is a very experienced and currently pursuing the Registered Manager's role. The staff team are regularly supported by staff from the other homes owned by the registered provider to make up a full-time rota; young people have established relationships with these staff. However, on occasions when external agency staff are used, this does impinge on continuity because regular activities undertaken by young people are often restricted. This is because external agency staff are unfamiliar with young people's needs and are therefore not left unsupervised. The increase of permanent staff is a matter raised recently by staff through monthly monitoring visits.

The ethos of this home is to support young people's independence and therefore, lone working forms part of staffs' shift patterns at night and in the mornings. A lone-working policy is in place but this is only for night time and does not refer to other times of the day. Effective systems are in place for shift handovers and this extends to excellent communication between staff, their colleagues in the school and the therapy team.

Business management and development plans are in place and monitored by senior managers. These plans are comprehensive and wide ranging. However, they are non-specific to this home and focus more on the organisation as a whole. As a result, there is no substantial evidence about how outcomes for young people or the operation home are monitored, planned or evaluated. Regular monthly monitoring visits are carried out and reports identify outcomes of conversations with staff and/or young people. Although outcomes are recorded, there is no further evidence demonstrating what action is taken to address the matters raised.

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.