

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Karen Malcolm
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is privately operated and provides long-term residential placements to up to four young women. The home has now extended its services to offer care and support to expectant and young mothers. Young women are able to reside at the home with their babies for a specified amount of time.

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 **inadequate**.

The overall effectiveness following this inspection is judged to be inadequate. The areas of concern relate to safeguarding of children and young people, and the leadership and management of the home. The outcomes for children and young people and the quality of care are judged as adequate.

Since the last inspection, there has been a significant increase in the number of incidents where young people are either missing from care or frequently absent without permission. The overall monitoring undertaken by the Registered Manager has not been effective in ensuring young people remain safe at all times when in the community.

Four requirements and one recommendation were made at the last inspection. Two of these have not been fully met. These relate to young people's overall care needs not being fully met and the effectiveness of monitoring records as part of the review of quality of care. The areas where there have been improvement relate to first aid training, notifications, and obtaining young people's views.

This inspection also identified other shortfalls including: the management of the home; staff training; the young people's guide; information included in children's case records; the portability of criminal records bureau (CRB) checks; the procedures for staff working alone; and the home's policies and procedures in relation to children missing from care and safeguarding.

Young people spoken to commented they feel safe in the home and understand why the home needs to call the police when they are missing or late back. Young people are making some progress from their starting point with education, and the home is aware that more improvement is needed. The relationship between staff and young people is sound.

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)	ensure that the children's guide is produced in a form appropriate to the age, understanding and communication needs of the children to be accommodated in the home (Regulation 4(4))	23/08/2013
7 (2001)	appoint an individual to manage the children's home if the registered provider is not, or does not intend to be, in full-time day to day charge of the children's home (Regulation 7(1)(b)(iii))	23/08/2013
11 (2001)	make proper provision for the care, education, supervision and, where appropriate, treatment of children accommodated there. In particular to the health and educational needs of young people (Regulation 11(1)(b))	23/08/2013
16 (2001)	devise, prepare and implement as required a procedure to be followed when any child accommodated in a children's home is absent without permission which is in line with any relevant local authority or police protocols on missing children (Regulation 16(4)(b))	23/08/2013
25 (2001)	ensure that there is at all times, having regard to the size of the children's home, the statement of purpose, and the number and needs (including any needs arising from any disability) of the children accommodated there, a sufficient number of suitably qualified, competent and experienced persons working at the children's home (Regulation 25(1))	23/08/2013
27 (2001)	ensure that all persons employed receive appropriate training, supervision and appraisal (Regulation 27(4)(a))	23/08/2013
28 (2001)	maintain in respect of each child who is accommodated in a children's home a record in permanent form which: includes the information, documents and records specified in Schedule 3 relating to that child; is kept up to date; and is signed and dated by the author of each written entry. (Regulation 28(1)(a)(b)(c))	23/08/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the care and support provided to children minimises the risk that they will go missing and reduces the risk of harm should the child go missing (NMS5.1)
- ensure children are helped to understand the dangers and risks of leaving the home without permission and are made aware of where they can access help if they consider running away (NMS 5.8)
- ensure where a child goes missing and there is concern for their welfare, or at the request of a child who has been missing, staff arrange a meeting between the child and the responsible authority in private to consider the reasons for the child going missing. The home considers with the responsible authority what action should be taken to prevent the child going missing in future. Any concerns arising about the placement are addressed, as far as possible, in conjunction with the responsible authority (NMS5.9)
- implement and demonstrate, including from written and electronic records, that the registered person consistently follows good recruitment practice, and all applicable current statutory requirements and guidance, in staff recruitment and carer's selection. This includes Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks. All personnel responsible for recruitment and selection of staff are trained in, understand and operate these good practices. This relates to the portability of CRB checks (NMS 16.2)
- ensure where only one member of staff is on duty at any time, a risk assessment has been carried out and recorded in writing, identifying any likely risks to children, staff and members of the public (NMS 17.9)
- ensure that the children's home procedure for safeguarding children is in line with Government guidance and requirements including the duty to refer information to statutory bodies. It is known to staff, volunteers and children (NMS20.2)
- ensure that the manager regularly monitors, in line with regulations, all records kept by the home to ensure compliance with the home's policies, to identify any concerns about specific incidents and to identify patterns and trends. Immediate action is taken to address any issues raised by this monitoring (NMS 21.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **adequate**.

Young people confirm that since arriving in the home they have made some progress. They have developed emotional resilience, and some have clear plans for their future. Some young people are supported to gain additional and appropriate

educational skills and are taking the next step forward to further education.

Young people benefit from a healthy lifestyle, which includes eating a balanced diet. Young people are encouraged to plan, shop for and prepare different cultural dishes and to share these experiences with the home. As a result, young people feel happier that their cultural needs are being recognised in a way that is important to them. Young people are supported with their health needs, including physical, emotional and psychological health. However, the information pertaining to this is not consistently recorded or updated to evidence what has improved for young people and if further treatment is required, such as a follow-up after a dental appointment.

Young people are supported to share their wishes, views and feelings. Young people prefer one to one meetings with staff, rather than group meetings. The arrangements for group meetings have not been successful, even though various types of group meetings have been held within the home. Young people spoken to said they like the one to one meetings, as they get more from this.

Although some young people's attendance at school has improved, this remains a challenge for others. The educational achievements of young people are satisfactory, taking into account their starting point at the time of placement. Some young people are supported with home tuition. Others are preparing to leave school and are attending planned interviews for further educational colleges.

Young people who are able to see their own families, enjoy regular contact. Young people benefit from constructive and positive visits to the home. Some family members support young people to attend appointments, such as court or health check-up appointments.

Those young people who are at the point of preparing for adult life, are at the initial stage of such preparation. The majority of the young people living in the home have gained practical independence skills through past life experiences. Young people are in the process of gaining life skills in interviewing techniques, for further education and part time employment.

Quality of care

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

Not all young people can be confident that all their care needs are appropriately addressed by the home. Essential information required about individual's care needs was missing from their files, such as general practitioner and education information. Placement plans are in place. Monthly progress reports are completed and submitted to the young people's social workers. These reports are a summary detailing what has improved for the young people and any areas of concern.

Young people enjoy sound relationships and interact well with staff. Young people have a key worker who spends time with them, advising and supporting them to

make informed choices. One to one meetings are held either in the home or at a local café bar. The Registered Manager explained that one to one meetings are much more successful than group meetings, which have been a challenge for some young people.

Staff set appropriate boundaries for young people and respond appropriately to any anti-social behaviour. Young people can at times challenge these boundaries. Staff are able to respond through listening, negotiating and discussing the issue with the young person. The outcome is that young people feel listened to. Since the last inspection, no complaints have been recorded.

Health matters, such as dental or other specific health concerns, are not consistently followed up or risk assessed. Where young people's health may need further intervention by other professionals, it is not always clear how this is managed or reviewed. Therefore, young people's health concerns may not always be supported appropriately by the home.

Staff promote the education of young people, but their attendance at school is mixed. Some young people have in-house tutoring or are supported to attend school and further education appointments. However, the records maintained regarding the attainment and attendance of young people are not consistently completed. Therefore, it is unclear what educational support is in place for young people and if it is effectively managed.

The cultural identity of young people is addressed. The Registered Manager is aware that some young people have expressed within the home how they feel they may be perceived by the general public when out in the community with staff. The staff team are exploring this with the young people to ensure they feel as comfortable as possible at all times and that their identity is promoted.

The home provides sound accommodation for young people. They have their own lockable rooms with en-suite facilities to ensure that they are able to maintain privacy. Rooms are brightly decorated. The lounge is well furnished and relaxing. The outhouse which is used as a games room is situated at the end of the garden and has been recently refurbished.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people's safety is not fully promoted by the home, especially in relation to young people going missing from care. Since the last full inspection, the number of incidents relating to young people being missing or frequently absent without permission have significantly increased. Young people are frequently placing themselves at risk. However, there are no clear strategies in place to manage this effectively. Therefore, young people are not made fully aware of the dangers and the importance of keeping themselves safe, so that they can begin to change their behaviour. Risk assessments are completed and indicate where the risk of a young

person going missing is potentially high. However, these assessments are not reviewed or updated to reflect any change in behaviour or if the risk of going missing has increased or minimised.

The home does not have a copy of the local runaway and missing from home and care (RMFHC) protocols and procedures or the correct RMFHC protocol from the borough where young people are placed. However, staff are aware of the procedures to safeguard young people when they are missing from care, and they do ensure that the placing authority and police are kept informed.

Young people are looked after by staff that are competent. The majority of staff have been in their post for a number of years, including some of the sessional workers. However, the recruitment practice undertaken by the Registered Manager is not robust in relation to the portability of criminal records bureau (CRB) checks for sessional workers who later become permanent staff. All other recruitment checks are managed appropriately. Staff are vigilant in checking the identity of all visitors to the home. The effective monitoring and supervision of visitors keeps young people safe.

The home rarely uses restraint techniques and relies on building sound relationships with young people to help manage challenging behaviour. No events relating to the use of restraint had been recorded since the last inspection. Staff are trained in physical intervention; this helps to ensure that they are fully up to date with safe methods of restraint at all times.

Staff have been kept up to date with child protection and safeguarding training which is provided by the local authority. However, information on working together to safeguard children and maintaining good links with the local safeguarding children's board and the police have not been high on the home's agenda. Therefore, the home is not up to date with the current framework to protect and safeguard children appropriately.

The home provides a safe environment for young people. Fire safety and other household checks are conducted at frequent intervals. All essential equipment checks have been conducted within the past year. All safety measures in the home are carefully monitored and updated regularly.

Leadership and management

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

The home is not effectively managed. The Registered Manager is also the Registered Individual. However, the Registered Manager is not currently in full-time day to day charge of the home. This role is shared between the Registered Manager and the deputy. There is no effective oversight or development plans to identify the home's strengths and weaknesses and to assess whether it is organised, staffed and managed in a manner which delivers good quality care that meets young people's individual needs. The quality assurance report undertaken by the manager is brief,

especially in relation to young people missing from care, even though this is a significant concern and the home's procedures for missing children are not compliant with local procedures. Therefore, young people's safety and care, both within the home and outside in the community, are not consistently monitored, to ensure all areas of risks are minimised.

The home has a Statement of Purpose and children's guide. Young people are provided with information about the home upon arrival. However, for those young people who may have some difficulties in understanding what is presented, there is no alternative information available to guide them. Therefore, young people may not be appropriately supported to understand their rights and the rules of the home.

The requirements and recommendation from the last inspection have not been fully met within the time specified at the last inspection. Therefore, identified areas for improvement have not all been taken by the home.

The home's staffing levels are insufficient to ensure that all young people receive appropriate support. For instance, where only one member of staff is on duty at any time, especially at night, no risk assessment has been carried out to ensure all persons within the home are fully protected at these times. There is an on-call system in place; however, it is unclear if this is followed by each member of staff when an emergency or crisis arises.

Staff development and training have not been consistently updated. The majority of training provided to and undertaken by staff within the last year has been in relation to safeguarding and child protection. Training refresher courses such as food hygiene, fire, and health and safety have not been undertaken by staff for several years. The home can now support young mothers for specified time, when necessary. However, young mothers placed in the home cannot be fully confident that the staff supporting them are appropriately skilled and trained to meet their needs.

Two social workers commented that the communication between them and the home is good, and that the young people are coping well with some of the boundaries and the nurturing system in place. They receive regular monthly reports which detail how well the young people are doing. Staff were also positive about the home and support given to young people. One member of staff member stated, 'our approach is good. The only challenge is getting young people to engage in different activities, this has been a challenge for some time, but there are some plans in place to improve this'.

All significant events relating to the protection of young people accommodated in the home are notified by the registered person to the appropriate authorities.

Confidential files and young people's case records are kept securely in the staff office.

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* and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes.