

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Jennie Christopher
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This is a local authority children's home that provides care and accommodation for up to five children and young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

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 enjoy good relationships with staff and young people make progress as a result. Young people are positive about the home and staff. Observed interactions show young people are supported to overcome barriers and challenges in their lives. Young people say they are listened to and that staff are concerned for their well-being.

Staff form effective relationships with parents, carers, education and a wide range of specialist services, which ensures a consistent approach to care and planning. Social workers comment that staff communicate effectively with them and that staff are 'child-centred'. Young people benefit as a result of living in a home where they are able to build good relationships in a caring environment with clear boundaries.

The home's management and senior teams guide and motivate the staff group, who are enthusiastic about the underpinning ethos in the therapeutic training they are currently undertaking. Young people benefit as a result of staff commitment and the increasingly individualised focused approach to care. Young people are supported to live in a group and to value others opinions and beliefs. Bullying is not raised currently as a concern. Young people are involved in consultation through their reviews and informal discussion.

The management team strive for improvement and are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. Clear development plans identify areas for improvement in care and in the physical environment. The areas for improvement identified as a result of this inspection include: ensuring restraint and sanction records contain all the information required; ensuring notifications are made to Ofsted when

appropriate; evidencing consultation with young people and how their views have affected the day to running of the home; ensuring there is a clear policy regarding isolation of electricity to bedrooms and ensuring the use of alarmed doors is included in young people's care plans and that consent is gained for the placing authority to use this method of surveillance.

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
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure on control, discipline or restraint in a children's home, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose which shall include all elements listed (Regulation 17B (3)(a-i)(4)(a)(b))	31/07/2013
30 (2001)	ensure that when an event as listed in column 1 in Schedule 5 takes place, Ofsted are notified as appropriate. (Regulation 30(1))	31/07/2013

Recommendations

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

- evidence when children's views, wishes and feelings are acted upon in the day to day running of the home. Furthermore ensure young people are supported to understand when their ideas and wishes cannot be acted upon (NMS 1)
- devise a policy that details how the home's design promotes the health and safety of young people, with specific regard to the isolation of electricity to bedrooms (NMS 10.2)
- ensure that where electronic devices are used as surveillance, there is a written policy detailing their use and how privacy will be maintained. Furthermore ensure consent is gained from the placing authority for such measures and their use is detailed in individual care plans. (NMS 10.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people make positive progress in all aspects of their lives, in relation to their

starting points. Young people benefit from individualised care and support enabling improved confidence, self-esteem and understanding of their personal history. Young people are valued as individuals and staff's positive regard promotes strong attachments, developing the foundations for young people to sustain appropriate relationships with peers and family.

Health promotion ensures young people have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and what this means for them. Young people mostly enjoy good health with limited use of prescribed medication. They are supported to stop smoking through receiving cessation support and individual incentives.

Support and encouragement from staff ensures young people are able to better understand the causes of their risk-taking behaviours and work positively towards reducing them. As a result, incidents of substance misuse and being missing from care have reduced for young people since living in the home. Where young people continue to struggle with risk taking, specialist support agencies engage with both the home and young person.

Attendance at school is mostly good and joint working between the home and school enables young people to progress and achieve in line with their peers. Those who struggle with education and attending school receive support from both staff and external agencies; which helps them overcome their barriers to learning.

Young people who have recently moved on from the home continue to engage in education and training. Young people have positive relationships in the community, accessing leisure activities and maintaining friendships for example.

While living in the home young people learn a wide range of practical skills, such as household cleaning tasks and cooking meals. In conjunction with this, they learn essential self-care and life skills in preparation for moving on to independence or their next identified placement.

Quality of care

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

Young people develop as a result of their constructive relationships with staff who are concerned about all aspects of their welfare. Young people are positive about staff and observed interactions are nurturing and supportive. Young people are supported to express themselves and be an individual.

Consultation with young people through house meetings and informal sessions ensures their views are sought and when possible acted upon. However this is not recorded effectively or consistently. Therefore there is little evidence of how young people's views have positively impacted upon the running of the home or care they receive or of when their ideas cannot be implemented. Young people are encouraged to be involved in their reviews and care planning. Social workers say that staff act as 'good advocates' for young people, to ensure their views are heard.

Staff have high aspirations for all young people in their care and the well-being and development of individual young people is central to all planning. Staff work as a team which ensures consistency of approach. On-going training in therapeutic techniques is developing their work with young people.

Staff support educational placements with robust communication between home and school with specialist education welfare officers supporting staff and young people when necessary. Those not in education or on reduced time-tables enjoy constructive activities during the school day, such as life skills and sporting activities. The changing needs of young people are continually monitored and plans updated by staff in consultation, where appropriate, with parents, social workers and other relevant professionals.

Young people attend all required medical appointments and there are close links with specialist health professionals when needed. Mental and emotional health specialists, such as Community Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and educational psychologists work closely with staff which ensures consistency of approach in supporting young people's emotional well-being and responses to unwanted behaviours. Medication is stored appropriately and there is a thorough system to ensure safety when administering. In case of emergency, there are several first aiders on site at all times.

Young people have access to independent advocates when required and know how to make complaints and who to complain to. Further information on how to access a range of advocacy and support services is clearly displayed. The home's proactive response to young people's complaints has ensured a swift resolution and change where necessary. Young people say bullying is currently not an issue, and when it has been in the past, restorative approaches have been used try and resolve any concerns.

The well-maintained building has homely living and safety in mind, with many areas for independent or group interaction.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say they feel safe and that staff do all they can to keep them safe. Young people's welfare is promoted and staff protect young people from abuse or harm. Staff are confident in processes to follow should they be concerned for a young person's safety or welfare and are aware of child protection procedures. Policies within the home are proactive and updated in response to lessons learned locally and nationally; including identifying signs of exploitation. Staff are aware of individual vulnerabilities and work closely to ensure continued safety of all young people.

Young people do go missing from care and there are robust measures in place when

this happens. Triggers are identified and explored with young people and risk assessments updated to reflect this. Excellent joint working with specialist police officers helps to protect young people who are at risk of exploitation when they are missing. Comprehensive plans from regular meetings identify support and protective factors for those at risk of harm or offending. Incidences of being missing from care and other risk-taking behaviours such as offending and substance misuse have dramatically reduced and in some cases ceased. Individual files contain up-to-date photographs of young people in case of emergency.

The organisation's recruitment policy is thorough and ensures young people are protected from harm by robust personnel checks.

Individualised positive behaviour plans reward young people through positive reinforcement. Sanctions are proportionate, although sometimes generalised. Young people are encouraged to reflect on their behaviour and consider how future responses could be different. There is no policy on place for when disconnecting electricity to sockets in young people's bedrooms is appropriate and this is an institutional practice. Proactive responses to unwanted behaviour and increased use of therapeutic techniques results in limited use of restraint. However, records for both sanctions and restraint are not in line with current regulations.

Young people are safe from fire and other hazards as a result of thorough checks and procedures. The use of alarms on doors has not been authorised by the placing authority or included in placement plans to ensure they do not restrict movement while considering safety.

Young people's risk assessments are robust and thoughtful which ensures young people are able to enjoy age-appropriate activities and take controlled risks in line with individual behaviours and vulnerabilities.

Leadership and management

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

The manager has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home and monitors the home through effective and evaluative monthly monitoring of the building and records. There have, however, been failures to identify non-compliance with the requirements of regulation; firstly to record fully restraints and sanctions in the home and secondly to notify Ofsted of relevant serious incidents.

The excellent quality of the manager's monthly checks demonstrates the impact that living in the home has for young people, for example. Reports in relation to visits made to the home to monitor its conduct in line with Regulation 33 are sound. Within these processes, the management team seeks the views of young people their families and other stakeholders. As a result, young people benefit from an evolving and improving service, although as noted their views are not always effectively recorded. The comprehensive development plan identifies key areas for improvement, including how recommendations from previous inspections have been

implemented in practice.

The provider meets the aims and objectives as set out in the Statement of Purpose and staff fully understand the functions, purpose and ethos of the home. The young people's guide is in a simple format and contains information on external advice and advocacy services.

The home demonstrates excellent multi-agency working to improve outcomes for young people. Specialist mental health services, drugs workers and specialist police officers amongst other services, are actively involved to ensure the best possible care and outcomes for young people. Services that are not performing are challenged appropriately. Young people are supported to complain, when necessary, about services they receive. There have been no complaints from the community and relationships are mostly positive.

A consistent and enthusiastic staff team, who receive specialist training, care for young people. Training needs are identified in yearly appraisals and through quality and evaluative supervision. Newly appointed staff complete a thorough induction programme specific to the service, based on the Children's Workforce Development Council's induction standards. Practice concerns are challenged rigorously during regular supervision and when needed through the disciplinary process.

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.