

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Elaine Clare
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is run by the local authority and provides care and accommodation for up to six boys or girls. The home is registered to care for young people with emotional 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 **inadequate**.

The home provides personalised care plans and a variety programme of activities and leisure arrangements for young people, which takes into account their individual needs. The quality of relationships between staff and young people in the home is generally positive. However, managers and staff do not demonstrate a sufficient understanding of safeguarding and young people are not kept safe. There are failures in safeguarding young people's welfare and they are at risk of possible harm when they are missing from the home.

The educational achievement made by some young people is minimal and progress made is not helping them to achieve positive outcomes in later life. Training undertaken by the staff covers basic requirements but does not equip staff to have a good understanding of the complex needs of the current young people at the home at this time.

The leadership and management of the home are inadequate. Monitoring and evaluation by leaders and managers do not guarantee the quality of care practices in the home and do not contribute to driving improvements in outcomes for 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)	prepare and implement a written policy which is intended to safeguard children accommodated in the children's home from abuse or neglect (Regulation 16 (1))	16/02/2014
18 (2001)	promote the educational achievement of children accommodated in the children's home; in particular, by ensuring that the children make use of educational facilities appropriate to their age, aptitude, needs, interests and potential. (Regulation 18 (1) (a))	16/02/2014
27 (2001)	ensure that all persons employed receive appropriate training (Regulation 27 (4)(a))	16/02/2014
34 (2001)	establish and maintain a system for improving the quality of care provided in the children's home. (Regulation 34 (1) (b))	16/02/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure sanctions and rewards for behaviour are clear, reasonable and fair and are understood by all staff and children (NMS 3.8)
- ensure 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 (NMS 5.1)
- ensure when a child goes missing and there is a concern for their welfare, staff arrange a meeting between the child and the responsible authority to consider the reasons for the child going missing (NMS 5.9)
- ensure that staff are given training to provide appropriate care if looking after children with complex health needs (NMS 6.8)
- ensure that staff have up-to-date information about each child's educational progress and school attendance record (NMS 8.7)
- ensure the home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well maintained and decorated. Risk reduction does not lead to an institutional feel (NMS 10.3)
- ensure that there is an emergency escape plan and that children are familiar with and have practiced so they know what to do in an emergency (NMS 10.9)
- ensure that the manager regularly monitors all records to identify any concerns about specific incidents and to identify patterns and trends (NMS 21.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **inadequate**.

The staff-to-young person ratio and the range of individual support available help young people to maintain positive and appropriate interactions with key adults. Some young people are becoming more confident in themselves and they are increasing their abilities, able to establish a level of trust with the significant people in their lives. This supports their involvement in decision-making and is likely to help young people move more successfully into adulthood.

Young people identify staff that they particularly like more than others and they all report that there are adults they can talk to with any concern or worry. One young person said 'you have your own key worker.. everyone is friendly.' A social worker reports very positively on the outcomes for a young person reporting that staff listened to what the young person needed and have put appropriate plans in place. Staff are reported to be very calm with young people, an aspect of care identified by a social worker that this home does well. Another social worker reported 'staff are always friendly and approachable and try their best with my child's behaviour and deal with the family.'

The weekly residential meetings provide young people with a regular forum where they can talk about arising issues. These meetings enable young people to reflect on the key issues which affect them and they have opportunity to consider other people's perspectives and responses to situations. This helps their development of effective communication and helps to increase their understanding of diversity.

Young people attend education through a main stream school or via a training centre. Attendance levels are excellent for some and poor for others. One staff member reported 'the educational places where children who are not in main stream school attend are very poor providers of education. In fact one educational/training provision is desperately bad.' An example of this is a young person who attended the same painting and decorating course three times over three years and following a work placement was dismissed as he couldn't hold a paint brush or open a tin of paint safely. The registered manager of the home explained that the young person enjoyed going and so this is why they continued to send him.

Staff reported that young people attending the training centre sometimes return home within ten minutes of arriving at the centre and explain that young people continue to get an attendance mark for the day as they have taken part in registration. This allows young people to receive a £40 weekly incentive which is then used by some to buy alcohol and other illegal substances. Furthermore young people are able to book 'holiday' with the training centre if they don't wish to attend. As a result the educational provision for some young people is hindering their chances to improve their lives and have positive futures and outcomes.

Young people receive some support to help them to understand key health risks and

to maintain their physical and emotional well-being. However staff have not received training in specific health conditions which effect the young people. Young people have opportunity to take part in a range of leisure activities. Such participation encourages young people to engage in physical exercise, widens their skills and horizons and provides opportunity for them to spend time outside of the home taking part in the local community. However, there is evidence to show that young people are making inappropriate peer friendships outside of the home and this has resulted in young people taking significant risks to their health and welfare.

Some young people, whose behaviour is unsafe and places them at risk of harm, are not showing a significant reduction in their risk-taking activities. The home's failure to comply with requirements results in young people's welfare not being safeguarded.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy positive relationships with staff. One young person identified these relationships as the best thing about living in this home. They said, 'the staff are brilliant!' Another said that they were on their twelfth placement and this was the best place ever. Another young person simply said, 'I love it here'.

Young people say they know how to raise their concerns and how to make a complaint. They are able to speak directly to a number of staff on a daily basis about their worries, and they also have access to independent advocacy. Helpline numbers are prominently displayed and young people have access to a telephone to speak to relevant persons and agencies about their concern.

Young people's detailed and individualised placement plans guide staff in how to support each young person and meet their needs. The home regularly reviews and updates its care plans and individual risk assessments to include statutory review decisions and in response to young people's emerging needs and progress. Care plans clearly identify equality and diversity issues. Staff are respectful of each young person's uniqueness and they make suitable support arrangements to meet young people's differing needs and abilities.

Young people have opportunity to take part in a range of leisure activities both within the home and in the community. One young person attends the local Scout group and other young people takes part in work experience at the local café or animal sanctuary.

Risk and damage reduction measures in place impact adversely on the home's premises and environment and the quality of care provided to young people. For example, lounge and other communal rooms are locked along with the kitchen and cupboards where food is kept. As a result the house accommodation does not provide young people with a homely and comfortable environment in which to live. Young people can personalise their bedrooms and adequate storage for their

personal items is provided.

Young people attend school or training centres nearby and the education co-ordinator in the home ensures that there is some educational provision for every young person. Staff assist young people with attending school by transporting them and attending functions and parent evenings. In the home there are some books and games to further promote learning. However staff do not sit with young people and help them learn. The Registered Manager explained that it was hard work to get young people to attend education and to continue to do that in the evening would not be possible. Young people have use of one computer between the six young people which also has internet access. This is not ideal and does not promote the use of computers for school work. In addition, most young people want to access the computer to speak with friends and family and this is not always possible as the facility is shared.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people's safety and welfare are at risk because of the deficiencies in the home's safeguarding practice. Staff do not demonstrate a sufficient understanding of safeguarding and child protection procedures. This shortfall potentially places young people at risk of harm.

Young people know how to make a complaint. They have access to advocacy and can telephone helpline numbers and the police to express their concerns. Staff take account of young people's personal history and the impact of their past experiences on their current behaviour. The home has drawn up individual behaviour management plans and risk assessments for each young person. These documents guide staff in the most suitable way to manage likely arising challenging behaviour. However, there has been no overall significant reduction in the number of young people going missing from the home since the last inspection. Some young people have reported that they have been involved in inappropriate sexual activity while under the influence of alcohol. This is of significant concern.

When young people go missing, staff are proactive in searching for them and make effort to quickly return them to the home. On return, staff speak with young people to try to understand the meaning of their behaviour, to take steps to ensure their future safety. However, repeated patterns of going missing have not been promptly addressed by the home to minimise the reoccurrence and reduce the risks to young people. One parent commented ' (young people) all just take off and the staff can't do anything to stop them. Only tell them to be back by 10:30.' A staff member demonstrated their lack of understanding of the seriousness of the concerns by saying ' young people do not go missing for long periods - it's usually overnight'. The Registered Manager had failed to bring together professionals to discuss a strategy to minimise the risk that young people go missing. This has failed to bring a coordinated approach to safeguard young people and the local authority

safeguarding procedures have not been followed.

Although there are behaviour management strategies in place at the home these are not effective in improving the behaviours of young people. Individualised rewards systems are tailored to the targets of each child. Frequent positive consequences are used to reinforce good behaviour and personal achievements. In addition there is a key worker session to discuss the problem or a piece of research by the young person to explore the dangers of their actions. However the home uses sanctions inconsistently and as a consequence young people are not clear or understand how to improve their behaviour.

Environmental and safety checks, with the exception of fire alarm drills, are completed within the appropriate timescale to ensure that young people live in safe premises. Young people regularly take part in evacuation drills to ensure that they know what to do in the event of an emergency. However some young people who have recently moved into the home have not been a part of a fire drill and though they have received instruction on what to do in the event of a fire this too was significantly after they arrived into the home. This does not ensure young people have clear understanding when they first arrive in the home on what to do if there is a fire.

The recruitment and selection of the home's employees are carried out in line with Safer Recruitment guidance.

Leadership and management

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

There are a number of key areas of management and practice which are inadequate, and also significant regulatory failings. Leaders and managers do not demonstrate a sufficient awareness and understanding of the weaknesses in the home's operation. This results in insufficient action being taken to raise standards and bring about improvement in outcomes for young people.

In particular, the inadequate management oversight of the home fails to ensure that all staff's work is consistent with the home's policies and procedures, with the relevant regulations and standards, and with local safeguarding protocols. These shortfalls in practice mean that young people's welfare and safety are not secured.

Monitoring and evaluation activities, relating to the quality of the home, lack sufficient rigour to improve the quality of care and to ensure young people are safe. In particular, monitoring processes do not demonstrate good use of the gathered information being utilised to improve outcomes for young people.

Young people's files contain a good amount of information to provide them with a history of their lives while in placement. Regular reports are sent to social workers to inform them of young people's progress.

Staff have access to induction and further training opportunities. Supervision is regularly provided through individual and group sessions. However, there is extremely little training on the specific needs associated with the young people they are currently looking after. This does not ensure that staff are competent in looking after young people well.

The staffing levels provided meet the staffing ratios outlined in the home's Statement of Purpose. There is a low staff turnover. A staff member commented 'I feel extremely well supported in my role. My supervisions are in depth and I am encouraged to view my opinions and concerns I may have. The home is well supported by the manager.'

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.