

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Peter Harrell
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is one of a number of children's homes operated by a city council. It provides care and accommodation for up to five young people who have emotional and/or behaviour difficulties. The home is an admissions unit where the intention is to move young people on to more suitable care and accommodation, such as a return to their parental home, identified foster placement, preparation for independent living, or a long-term children's home.

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 **adequate**.

The home is currently providing an adequate level of care for young people. Two requirements and six recommendations have been made.

The home is managed by an experienced manager and staff group, which is mixed in gender, experience and ethnicity, who have developed effective relationships with young people in the home. Young people make adequate progress in relation to their starting points across aspects of their welfare and development, where account is taken of the individual and cultural needs of young people.

Young people form positive relationships with their staff team and the Registered Manager. They are satisfied with the quality of care that they receive and say that they feel safe and are looked after well. Young people's views influence the home's development, helping young people to feel valued and developing their sense of belonging and security. Staff show a strong commitment to supporting young people's educational needs. Staff are committed to help and support young people on all aspects of their lives. Professionals outside the home are positive about the level of care and the communication the young people receive. The home has strengths in providing individualised support to young people and help with preparation for independent living. Staff are trained to meet young people's needs and receive support from the manager. They are helped to carry out their tasks with a comprehensive programme of relevant training.

There are several matters raised for immediate improvement in order that the regulations are met. Recommendations have also been made in order to improve outcomes for young people and provide a better quality service. They relate to safety precautions in case of fire, smoking, storage of medication, checking visitors, monitoring visits, supervision of staff and improvements in the physical conditions 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
32 (2001)	ensure, after consultation with the fire and rescue authority, there is adequate precautions against the risk of fire, including the provision of suitable equipment and adequate fire exit signage as stated in the fire risk assessment (Regulation 32 (1) (b))	31/08/2012
32 (2001)	ensure by means of fire drills and practices at suitable intervals, that the persons working at the home and, so far as practicable, children accommodated there, are aware of the procedure to be followed in case of fire. (Regulation 32 (1) (e))	31/08/2012

Recommendations

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

- make sure unchecked visitors are adequately 'chaperoned' when on the home's premises, for example, through the use of a visitors book (NMS 4.8)
- ensure children understand their health needs, how to maintain a healthy lifestyle and to make informed decisions about their health particularly in relation to smoking (NMS 6.2)
- ensure medicines kept in the home are accessible only by those for whom they are intended. Specifically, staff medication, if kept in the home, it is separate from young people's medicines (NMS 6.13)
- ensure the home provides a comfortable and homely environment (NMS 10.3)
- ensure staff have access to support and advice and are provided with regular supervision (NMS 19.4)

- ensure there are clear and effective procedures for monitoring the activities of the home. In particular that visits to the home carried out under Regulation 33 take place at regular intervals. (NMS 21.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people receive care which supports them to reach their full potential and to promote their independence. Staff support young people as individuals, appropriate to their age and understanding, to develop practical and personal self-care and daily living skills. There have been measurable outcomes achieved in these areas with young people becoming more self-sufficient and being helped to develop a positive view of themselves. Consultation with young people is actively sought and can be seen in regular residents' meetings and key worker sessions. Young people demonstrate a range of choices and reports indicate young people participating and feeding back their views and feelings to their key workers with the regular use of questionnaires. Being involved in the development of the home is viewed as important for the young people; additionally they say they can raise issues of concern formally and informally with members of staff.

Taking account of the starting points of young people living at the home, educational progress is adequate. Young people say that staff have been very supportive with regard to their education and have been helpful in their selection of career options, course choices and transporting them significant distances in order to maintain regular school attendance. This view was supported by professionals who provide feedback for this inspection. Young people preparing to move on to independent living are supported to develop skills which equip them for this transition, they are supported with opportunities to shop, budget and cook with the assistance of staff.

Young people eat a generally healthy diet and have access to a wide range of food and nutritional advice. However, there was no evidence of smoking cessation programmes in place and some young people continue to smoke tobacco which will detract from their physical and psychological health over time.

Young people are fully supported with contact visits and telephone calls and they benefit from the additional emotional support of staff at these times. This practice enables young people to maintain meaningful relationships with significant people in their life.

Quality of care

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

Young people live in a caring environment which is described as 'a calm place' by a childcare professional who provided feedback for this inspection. Supportive relationships exist between staff and the young people in the home. The composition of the staff team, being mixed in gender, experience and ethnicity, enhances the

care for young people. Staff ensure that the needs and wishes of young people are met whilst carrying out their duties in a supportive and professional manner. Young people are appreciative of the care and support provided to them and their overall experience of living at the home. Young people benefit from positive reinforcement and participation in a range of activities which has increased their confidence. One young person said of the home ' Sometimes it can be fun and I would give it 7 out of 10'.

Policies and procedures are established for dealing with complaints which are clear and accessible and contained in the young person's guide. Although no complaints have been made since the last inspection, young people confirmed that they know how to complain and are supported to raise any matters of concern. There have also been positive comments from professionals involved in the care of young people who referred to 'Good communication, staff keep me informed and manage a young persons' anxieties very well'.

Young people access various local healthcare services to obtain information advice and support. Suitable records are maintained of healthcare appointments made and attended. Specialist intervention services are provided to meet the specific needs of some young people and systems are in place for the safe storage, receipt, administration and disposal of unwanted medication for the protection of young people. However, there is no clear separation between medication intended for young people and those medicines provided for staff. There is potentially the risk that this could inadvertently be administered to young people.

Relationships between professionals and other agencies are good. Staff understand the importance of liaising closely with the local police to ensure young people feel safe and there is continuity in responses to young people when they have left the home and are in the wider community.

The home's design and location is suitable for its function. Young people live in a caring environment and there is a programme of maintenance. It is furnished appropriately and is maintained in good decorative order. However, there were pictures which needed to be put up on the walls and some of the bedrooms and communal areas were sparsely decorated, which detracts from a homely feel. Young people are provided with their own bedrooms which they personalise. Young people's bedroom doors are fitted with appropriate locks. The home provides young people with a good level of communal spaces. This, together with sufficient bath, shower and toilet facilities, meets the individual and collective needs of young people. The doors to these facilities are fitted with suitable locks to promote the privacy and dignity of young people.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people report that they are safe at the home and feel able to report any concerns to staff. The staff at the home are knowledgeable about safeguarding

procedures and are aware of the latest local authority safeguarding guidance. Local authority designated safeguarding officers details have been shared with the staff team. Training in safeguarding procedures is comprehensive and takes place regularly, this ensures that staff have up to date knowledge regarding how to protect vulnerable young people. The manager knows when to report matters or to seek advice from a range of professionals outside the home. There have been two notifications since the last inspection, one of which was a child protection incident. This incident was dealt with promptly and managed appropriately.

Professionals outside the home are regular visitors and there is a clear record of the purpose of these visits and meetings. However, at the time of the inspection, the home did not use a visitors' book to check people entering and leaving the building, this shortfall may not have a direct impact on the care provided to young people but the absence of this building security system could compromise their safety.

There are sound procedures in place for young people who go missing, which are linked to young people's individual risk assessments and behaviour plans. These documents are reviewed and updated to reflect new protocols for working with young people who go missing. Records kept of these incidents are clear. Since the last inspection, there have been five incidents of young people going missing. These incidents occurred over short periods of time and were responded to appropriately. The home has developed a good working relationship with the police and other agencies, which includes young people being 'flagged' due to their vulnerability and early reporting, ensuring a robust and consistent response.

The main focus of the home's behaviour management approach is through the use of rewards and sanctions. The home has an appropriate policy and procedure for the use of restraint which the records reflect. There have been no incidents of restraint since the last inspection and young people state that they have not been restrained. Staff receive update training on behaviour management which ensures that young people are cared for safely.

There have been no new staff employed since the last inspection. Employment records show that the local authority has in place procedures to employ new staff, which should follow safer recruitment practices. Some staff comment that they do not always have regular supervision, which is necessary in order that they are supported in carrying out their work and for managers to take account and respond to any issues staff have regarding the day-to-day care provided to young people.

There are significant shortfalls regarding the safety of young people in the event of a fire at the home. Records confirm that the alarm systems are tested regularly, although, fire drills have not been taking place during the evenings. As a result young people or visitors could be placed at risk in the event of a fire. Procedures are in place to ensure maintenance of equipment. Risk assessments are used to identify and reduce risks from hazards around the building, grounds and young people's activities but the action points of these assessments have not all been acted upon. For example, a recent fire risk assessment stated that there needs to be signs to indicate an emergency escape route. However, at the time of this inspection no

signage is visible in the home. In addition, not all identified risks are recorded in the written risk assessments, for example young people smoking. These matters seriously compromise young people's safety and remedial action is required to ensure that both the young people and staff in the home are safe.

Leadership and management

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

The home is staffed by an established team, sufficient in number to meet young people's needs. A diverse range of experiences, gender and ethnicity are reflected in the staff team. The Registered Manager is experienced and has the appropriate qualifications. Staff training has a high profile in the home and staff have completed several training courses relevant to their work; this makes the staff team prepared and responsive to young people's needs. The staffing rota ensures that there are a sufficient number of staff to deliver care and attend to administrative tasks. This ensures the young people can regularly meet with, and feel supported by adults working in the home.

This home is equipped to ensure young people experience good staff ratios, access activities and have a comfortable living environment. Young people experience care from a small team that is positive about the young people they care for and want them to do well. Record keeping is clear with recording systems in place. There is involvement from young people in recording development and progress whilst they are staying at the home and this helps with their understanding of their time in placement.

Systems are in place to monitor the performance of the home. Recently, monthly unannounced Regulation 33 visits have not been taking place which means that although this shortfall in monitoring does not have a direct impact on the care provided to young people and other processes of monitoring are in place, it means without these visits, senior managers in the local authority cannot effectively oversee all aspects of the progress of the home.

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.