

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 local authority. The home provides care and accommodation for five young people of either gender, aged 12 to 17 years at any one time, who may be experiencing 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 **adequate**.

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

Recent staff departures, together with the unforeseen absence of some permanent members of staff, has put pressure on the children's home to deliver an effective service to children and young people. Despite this situation, stable and effective relationships have developed with the young people and they talk very positively about the care they receive at the home.

Young people make good progress in relation to their starting points across many aspects of their welfare and development, with account taken of their individual and cultural needs. Young people say that they feel safe and are well cared for. Staff support the educational needs of young people and are committed to advocate for and support young people in all aspects of their lives and promote their future independence. Professionals outside the home report positively regarding the level of care the young people receive. Staff training is provided, relevant to meeting young people's needs.

There are several matters raised for improvement in order that all of 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 recording of physical interventions and debriefing following incidents of physical restraint or challenging behaviour, staff supervision and appraisals, notifications, safe

recruitment and vetting of staff, consultation with young people and providing the children's guide in different languages.

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
17A (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of 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 the detail within the regulation (Regulation 17 (3) (4))	03/12/2012
27 (2001)	ensure that all persons employed, receive appropriate training, supervision and appraisal (Regulation 27 (4)(a))	31/12/2012
30 (2001)	ensure that if, in relation to a children's home, any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in schedule 5 takes place, the registered person shall without delay notify the persons indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of the table. (Regulation 30 (1))	03/12/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure that written records demonstrate whether young people, who complain of being injured during a restraint, are always given the opportunity to be examined by a registered nurse or medical practitioner (NMS 3.16)
- ensure all children and staff are given the opportunity to discuss incidents of restraint they have been involved in, witnessed or affected by, with a relevant adult. (NMS 3.17)
- ensure where the child requires it, the children's guide is available through suitable methods of communication, specifically translation into another language (NMS 13.6)
- ensure all people working in or for the children's home are interviewed and have references checked to assess suitability. In particular telephone enquiries are made as well as obtaining written references (NMS 16.1)
- ensure that personnel responsible for recruitment and selection of staff, in particular within the Human Resources department, are trained in, understand

and operate good practice in the recruitment of staff (NMS 16.2)

- ensure the children's home has a record of the recruitment and vetting checks which have been carried out on those working for the children's home which includes: at least two references and where possible, a statement from each referee as to their opinion of the person's suitability to work with children (NMS 16.3 (d))
- ensure that there is a system in place to monitor the quality and accuracy of record keeping and take action when necessary (NMS 22.1)
- ensure that a written record is kept which includes details of the action taken and the outcome of any action or investigation, following a notifiable event and where relevant, this is sent to Ofsted. (NMS 24.2).

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people receive a level of care which promotes their future independence and helps them to develop worthwhile life skills. Staff support the young people, appropriate to their level of understanding and age, to gain practical and personal living and self-care skills. Young people are assisted by staff at the home to have a positive view of themselves and for some young people, to move to semi-independent living. There have been positive and measurable outcomes achieved in these areas.

Young people generally eat a balanced healthy and nutritious diet and through varied menu choices and nutrition advice and have access to a wide range of food. Young people are consulted about the menus and involved in cooking and food preparation which further develops their independence and life skills. Motivated staff support young people to develop a range of practical skills, such as shopping, budgeting and cleaning.

Young people benefit from individual and regular dedicated support from keyworkers, which helps their confidence and self-esteem. Consultation is sought with young people through both residents meetings and key worker sessions; these take place on a regular basis. Young people demonstrate a range of choices and reports indicate young people participating and feeding back their views and feelings to their key workers and other staff at the home. Being involved in the development of the home is viewed as important for the young people; they say they can raise any issues of concern either formally or informally with members of staff. A child care professional described the progress of a young person at the home as 'a definite improvement, the young person now engages in education, gets on better with her peers and has made massive progress while living near her community.'

Taking into account their starting points, young people are supported to achieve educational targets. Young people's attendance and participation at college and school has increased through consistent messages and encouragement from staff at

the home. Young people say that staff are supportive with regard to their education and are helpful in their selection of courses, career options and maintain regular school attendance. This has increased their ability to achieve and learn, and progress to attain qualifications.

Young people are fully supported with contact visits and telephone calls, they benefit from additional emotional support of staff at these times. This enables young people to maintain positive and significant relationships with friends and family members.

Quality of care

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

Members of staff show concern and commitment to young people's welfare, which is a strength of the home. Young people live in an environment which is caring, with supportive relationships in place between staff and the young people in the home. However, at the time of the inspection, the staffing level was described by managers as 'thin', with management covering shifts for staff. This shortfall of the absence of permanent members of staff, over a period of time, reduces the opportunity for young people to form constructive relationships with adults who work at the home and impacts on the quality of the service provided to young people.

The staff team is mixed in gender, experience and ethnicity, which enhances the care the young people receive. Staff are committed to ensure that the wishes and feeling of young people are taken account of while carrying out their duties in a nurturing and caring manner. A social worker for a young person commented that staff at the home 'work really hard' and described the home as 'a good stepping stone for young people.'

Young people have their health needs met well. First aid training is provided for all staff and promotion of the health of the young people at the home takes place; they are supported to attend regular appointments with health professionals. This ensures young people have access to suitable medical treatment when needed. Procedures for the secure disposal and administration of medication are in place.

All young people know how to complain but there is infrequent use of formal procedures. Young people confirmed that they are supported to raise any matters which concern them and these are responded to promptly. Policies and procedures are in place for dealing with complaints, which are accessible and contained in the young person's guide. English is not the first language for several of the young people currently living the home; they would be better equipped upon arrival at the home, if the children's guide was translated into their home language.

The home's location and design is suitable and young people respect their living environment. The home is kept in a condition to meet the young people's needs. The communal lounge areas have been recently redecorated and furnished to provide a comfortable living space, which benefits young people. Young people have personalised their bedrooms to reflect their interests and personality. A young person

said 'I keep my bedroom tidy, it is nice.'

Young people's bedroom doors are fitted with appropriate locks and the home provides young people with several communal spaces to meet their joint and separate needs, as well as sufficient shower, bath and toilet facilities. There is a summerhouse in the garden area for meetings to take place, undisturbed from the activities of the main building.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people live in a home in which they are kept safe. Young people are further protected by the use of risk assessments. Young people say they feel safe and there are people they can talk to if they have any concerns.

Training in safeguarding procedures takes place regularly, which ensures that staff have up-to-date knowledge regarding how to protect vulnerable young people. The manager knows how to report matters or to seek advice from a range of professionals outside the home.

There has been one notification since the last inspection, which was a child protection incident. This incident was dealt with promptly and managed appropriately with meetings convened involving child care professionals. However, there was an unexplained delay in sending the notification Ofsted and when received it contained typographic errors. A follow up notification regarding the conclusion of the incident would have also enhanced further the recording of this situation.

There have been 13 incidents of restraint since the last inspection. The home has policies and procedures for the use of physical restraint and staff receive training updates on restraint and behaviour management to make sure that young people are managed safely should any incidents take place. At the last inspection, a requirement was raised to ensure an appropriate record is kept of incidents of physical restraint and a clearer recording system was put in place. However, most records still do not contain all the details required, such as signatures of members of staff, details of physical interventions and clear evidence which indicates whether discussion with the young people and staff involved takes place after every incident.

One of the incidents of restraint involved calling the police to the home, the local authority was informed but there should have been a notification to Ofsted. Consequently, shortfalls in notifications and recording, make it both difficult to review situations in order to learn lessons from such incidents, as well as evidencing whether or not young people are treated fairly. There are no consistent recordings to show that staff and young people are actively consulted and therefore cared for properly, following restraint incidents.

Procedures are in place by the local authority to employ new staff which follow safer recruitment practices. However, these practices are not comprehensively

implemented and all personnel records are not fully audited. For example, there are shortfalls in some recruitment records, as they do not include written references and evidence of telephone reference checks. These shortfalls may not have a direct impact on the day-to-day care provided to young people but they can potentially compromise young people's safety.

Procedures are in place for young people who go missing, linked to young people's behaviour plans and individualised risk assessments. These documents are reviewed and updated to reflect new protocols for working with young people who go missing, in consultation with the police and local safeguarding agencies. Records kept of these incidents are clear. Since the last inspection, there have been seven incidents of young people going missing. These incidents occurred over short periods of time and were responded to appropriately. The home has developed a working relationship with the police involving regular communication, which includes young people being 'highlighted' due to their vulnerability, ensuring a swift and consistent response.

To further safeguard young people, health and fire safety is promoted in the home. Regular checks are carried out and recorded. This includes fire alarm tests and fire drills at various times of the day and night. An escape route and the emergency plan are visible. Building risk assessments are used to identify and reduce any potential risks from hazards and there is consultation with the local fire officer. There is an on-going plan in place of maintenance work.

Leadership and management

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

Young people experience care from a staff team who are positive about the young people they care for and want them to do well. Systems are in place to monitor the performance of the home. Regulation 33 visits take place as required, and are unannounced. The home has a current Statement of Purpose.

A diverse range of gender, experiences and ethnicity are reflected in the staff team. The Registered Manager is experienced and has the appropriate qualifications. The Registered Manager and assistant managers have substantial experience in supporting staff teams and in working with children. Staff have completed several training courses relevant to their work; this makes the staff team prepared and responsive to young people's needs. However, there are recent staff vacancies, together with the unforeseen absence of some permanent members of staff, this has put pressure on managers to deliver direct care rather than attend to administrative and supervisory tasks. Managers' report they struggle to provide detailed supervision sessions, as they are required to cover for staff vacancies, the timetable for carrying out annual staff appraisals has also fallen behind schedule by several months. Action is required in this area, in order to allow staff to be directed to deliver consistent care for young people and to improve the quality of care of the service.

At the last inspection, three requirements and five recommendations were made.

The Statement of Purpose and children's guide have been updated. The entrance locks in the home are regularly maintained and are not restrictive. The security grilles, which are positioned internally in the offices of the children's home, are no longer used in daylight. A more detailed physical intervention and sanction recording system was required. A new recording system was put in place; however this requirement has not been fully met. There are significant gaps in recording required details following incidents, this results in a lack of monitoring and managers not being able to assist staff in reflective learning following physical restraints. This impacts upon staff not being equipped sufficiently to manage young people with challenging behaviour.

Staff understand the sensitive nature and purpose of young people's records, which are stored securely. Reviews meetings for young people are regularly held and whenever possible, young people are actively involved in the planning of these meetings.

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 children's homes.