

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Steve Pearson
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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.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service that exceeds minimum requirements

Satisfactory: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Service information

Brief description of the service

The children's home provides care and accommodation for up to six young people. The home is provided by a local authority and is registered to care for young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **satisfactory**.

Overall the quality of care is sound. Young people have positive outcomes and they make good progress after coming to live here.

The staff team are consistent and are well-supported. Relationships between the staff and young people are positive and the staff enable young people to take up a wide variety of sports and leisure interests.

Despite assessments and plans, the emergency admission of some young people can have a negative effect on residents already living in the home. There are also some shortfalls in how complaints are recorded and some necessary information is not being kept on children's files or in the home.

Young people have good attendance at school and college although actual attendance levels are not recorded, making it harder to demonstrate to young people how they are progressing. Young people are also being hindered in doing school and college work due to a lack of private study and desk space in the home.

Residential placement plans are not always up to date or clear about who is responsible for meeting young people's needs and by when. This means young people's needs may not always be fully met or may not be met in a timely manner.

Nevertheless, the home has made good progress since the previous inspection, outcomes for young people are positive and the internal and external management team are clearly intent on improving the overall quality of care for young people.

Areas for improvementStatutory 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
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24 (2001)	ensure that a written record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of the investigation. In particular the action taken should make clear how the complaint was investigated and what was found, and the outcome should make clear whether the complaint was upheld or not (Regulation 24(5))	15/11/2011
30 (2001)	ensure when notifying Ofsted of significant events that this is done without delay (Regulation 30(1))	26/10/2011
29 (2001)	maintain in the children's home those records required by legislation. In particular this relates to a record of any medication administered to a child (schedule 4, item 5) (Regulation 29 (1))	15/11/2011
28 (2001)	maintain, in respect of each child, a record in permanent form which includes the information, documents and records specified in Schedule 3. In particular this relates to a record in the child's case file of the date and circumstances of any measures of control or discipline (consequence or sanction) used on the child. (Schedule 3 item 13) (Regulation 28 (1))	26/10/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure all records relating to restraints and consequences are in formats that cannot be tampered with after the event for example, in bound numbered records (Vol 5 statutory guidance paragraph 2.91)
- ensure that the written records about when any child goes missing describe the circumstances of the child's return, any reasons they may have given for going missing, and any action taken in light of those reasons (NMS 5.10)
- provide suitable support and facilities to meet the educational needs of young people. In particular this means the provision of study and/or desk space to enable young people to do school or college work in private (NMS 8.4)
- maintain up-to-date information about each young person's school and college attendance record (NMS 8.7)
- maintain a written development plan, reviewed annually, for the future of the home, either identifying any planned changes in the operation or resources of the service, or confirming the continuation of the home's current operation and resource (NMS 15.2)
- ensure all staff recruited before 1 April 2011 have attained the Children & Young People's Workforce Diploma or a minimum level 3 qualification relevant to caring for children & young people (NMS 18.5)
- ensure the residential placement plan is kept under review and makes clear the

arrangements for meeting each young person's needs. (Vol 5 statutory guidance paragraph 2.20)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people develop and achieve clear and unique identities and are making good progress in achieving their potential. The staff strive to support this and have the right attitude. For example, one member of staff said 'young people are the experts in their own lives'.

Young people have good health. They benefit from support that is provided by a wide range of agencies. For example, they receive an annual health check-up, they can see a nurse with responsibility for looked after children and one staff member is trained to provide guidance about sexual health. Young people also succeed in reducing smoking through attendance at a smoking cessation clinic.

Young people achieve good levels of attendance at school and college and make particularly good progress in comparison to before they came to live in the home. However it is difficult to be clear of exact attendance levels or to show young people how they are progressing because ongoing attendance figures are not being collated. One young person said 'the staff always make sure we get up for school or college. We know we've got to go as it's for our own good'. However, there is a lack of private study and desk space to enable young people to do undertake work for school or college. Young people maintain continuity of friendships and educational progress because the staff aim to ensure they can continue to attend the same school after admission to the home.

Young people have regular contact with their friends and families and the staff provide good levels of support with transport. One young person also said 'it's useful having our own phone because we can ring our friends and family when we want'.

Young people are learning useful skills that will help them when they are older and living independently. For example, one young person said 'the staff teach us how to prepare and cook meals, they teach us how to budget our money when we shop for clothes and toiletries and they teach us laundry skills'. Older children are enabled to make full independent use of public transport.

Quality of care

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

The Registered Manager and staff enable young people to have a significant say in the running of the home and in the content of their care plans. This helps young people feel valued. The home has a strong ethos of promotion of children's rights and responsibilities. Young people are aware of how to raise concerns formally and informally. For example, one young person said 'we are given information about how

to make a complaint when we first come to live here'. However, the recording of complaints does not make clear what the person investigating the issue found or whether the complaint was upheld or not.

Relationships between the young people and the staff are good. Relationships between young people themselves are also generally positive. The home commonly admits children in an emergency in line with its Statement of Purpose. However this can sometimes have a negative impact on the progress of residents already living in the home. In such circumstances the placement is made as short as possible but there is nevertheless a risk that the admission may have had a negative effect.

Young people have access to a wide variety of leisure activities. Amongst the staff team members there are a wide variety of interests and they help the young people to experience a range of leisure experiences including sport, craftwork, cookery and music.

A protocol is in place to gather information about a young person and their needs before they are admitted to the home. On arrival at the home the staff also ensure that each young person has the information they need about the home and how it operates and they help them to settle in.

Residential placement plans are in place to describe the needs of the young people. However these are not always up to date. The recording format of the plans means it is also unclear what the staff themselves have to do to meet children's needs and by when. The needs of young people may therefore not be met in a timely manner. An independent reviewing officer reviews young people's needs at appropriate intervals. Each young person has a key worker who ensures that their views and opinions are made clear at statutory reviews.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people feel safe in the home. Sometimes bullying may arise but the staff are effective in addressing this. The staff use praise and reward to encourage positive behaviour. Young people said 'the staff don't use sanctions much but if they do they are fair'. The staff receive regular training in how to respond to challenging behaviour. This is focused on de-escalating challenging situations but the staff also receive training in how to restrain a young person if necessary.

Although there have been no restraints since the previous inspection, the recording format in place should there be one would not provide for full accountability.

The staff receive training in how to safeguard children. They are clear of their duty to report concerns and how to respond to allegations, suspicions or evidence of harm.

Sometimes young people fail to return to the home on time. Suitable protocols are in place for such occasions and the Registered Manager meets with the local police on a

regular basis to discuss any concerns. However, shortfalls in the recording of these occasions means it is harder to evaluate concerns about why a young person may have gone missing and their safety while they were absent.

The premises are maintained in a safe condition. Professional technicians regularly service the electrical equipment, gas appliances and equipment for preventing, detecting and extinguishing fires.

Appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure that staff recruited to work with young people are suitable and safe.

Leadership and management

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

The registered persons have met the two requirements and six recommendations made at the previous inspection. As a result of this Ofsted is better informed about serious incidents; the safety of young people has improved because the staff have assessed hazards that may affect young people; the staff are able to meet the behavioural needs of young people because behaviour management plans are in place and the staff are enabled to be clear about how to respond should any young person fail to return to the home on time.

The home has a written Statement of Purpose which sets out the function of the home and how it operates. Young people also receive a written guide to the home when they are first admitted. This contains a range of useful information. For example, one young person said 'I received a booklet about the home when I first came here and it was useful as it told me how the home runs and how to contact people'.

The Registered Manager and registered provider work together to ensure appropriate management of service and to consider how the service may develop. However there is no current written annual development plan to help consolidate such plans.

The home has appropriate staffing levels. For example, one young person said 'there are always three members of staff on duty and so we can usually do the things we want to do. This also helps to make sure the staff can watch over us'. Young people receive care from a balanced ratio of male and female staff. There is low staff turnover and no staff vacancies. This helps to provide consistency and security for the young people.

The staff have access to a variety of training. However a significant proportion of staff who were in place when the new national minimum standards came into effect seven months ago still do not have a level three qualification. Nevertheless the staff are now all studying for this.

The Registered Manager and staff receive monthly supervision and six-monthly performance assessments. They work well together and are supportive to each

other.

Sound management arrangements are in place. A clear management structure includes the Registered Manager, a deputy manager and three senior staff. The Registered Manager has recently completed a Level 5 Diploma in Leadership for Health and Social Care and Children and Young People's Services.

An external person visits the home once a month to assess the quality of care provided. They assess all the necessary information and consult young people, their parents and relatives and the staff in order to form their opinion. The manager also formally assesses the quality of care on a regular basis. Reports arising from both types of monitoring are sent to Ofsted in a timely manner so the regulator can keep up to date about how the home is performing.

The home is not maintaining all the information that is required by legislation. This means it will be difficult if a young person or agencies such as Ofsted need to assess such information in the future. The home is also not informing Ofsted of significant events in a timely manner. This therefore makes it more difficult for the regulator to keep abreast of significant concerns that may arise.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.