

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	22/01/2014
Inspector	Louisa Bayley
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Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	21/01/2013
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home provides medium and long-term placements for up to seven young people who have emotional and or behavioural difficulties. The home is owned and operated by a local authority.

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**.

This home provides high quality, nurturing care for young people who have complex histories and backgrounds. Young people make excellent progress as a result of the highly individual care they receive from the dedicated staff team.

Young people are very positive about their care; they can identify the progress they have made as a result of living in the home. They have warm and mutually respectful relationships with the staff and develop strong attachments. This underpins their ability to build their confidence, skills and emotional health.

Young people are and say they feel safe. This is confirmed by a range of professionals and parents who reported that staff promote young people's understanding of safety.

The management team have a good awareness of the strengths of the home and the areas for development. The manager acknowledged the high quality of care that staff provide. There is recognition that administrative tasks are an area that require improvement. The findings of the inspection confirm this.

There are a number of shortfalls which relate primarily to record keeping. The records of medication do not demonstrate a clear stock control; there are minor recording omissions in staff recruitment files; the Statement of Purpose does not reflect the current staffing and has an error in the description of the service; the external monitoring does not provide for consultation with parents and relatives. There is a lack of clarity in the recording of restraints and sanctions; however, the use of

restraint is appropriate. Shortfalls against National Minimum Standards include; lack of consistent offer of medical attention following a restraint, lack of robust monitoring of records in the home against policies, standards and regulatory requirements and some gaps in staff supervision.

Although there are regulatory breaches, the focus on good quality care and outcomes means that young people's safety and well-being is promoted rather than compromised. Staffing shortages in the home have contributed to and compounded some of the shortfalls. The increase in staffing serves to resolve some of the issues and there is commitment from the manager and higher managers to make the necessary improvements.

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
5 (2001)	keep under review and, where appropriate, revise the statement of purpose and the children's guide and notify the HMCI of any such revision within 28 days (Regulation 5 (a) (b))	28/02/2014
17 (2001)	ensure that no measure of control or discipline which is excessive, unreasonable or contrary to paragraph (2) shall be used at any time on children accommodated in a children's home, with particular reference to any punishment involving the consumption or deprivation of food or drink (Regulation 17 (1) (2) (b))	28/02/2014
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline in a children's home, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose of which shall include all matters set out in Regulation 17B 3 (Regulation 17B (3) (a-i))	28/02/2014
21 (2001)	make suitable arrangements for the recording, handling, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of any medicines received into the children's home (Regulation 21 (1))	28/02/2014
29 (2001)	maintain in the children's home the records specified in Schedule 4 and ensure that they are kept up to date, with specific reference to number of hours worked, gender and whether staff reside in the home (Regulation 29 Schedule 4 (2) (b) (f) (g))	28/02/2014
33 (2001)	interview, with their consent and in private, such of the children accommodated there, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home as appears necessary in order to form an opinion of the standard of care provided in the home.	28/02/2014

	(Regulation 33 (4) (a))	
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Recommendations

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

- ensure that, where there has been physical restraint, children's homes must be able to call on medical assistance as required and children are always given the opportunity to be examined by a registered nurse or medical practitioner (NMS 3.16)
- regularly monitor, in line with regulations, all records kept by the home to ensure compliance with the home's policies, to identify any concerns about specific incidents and to identify patterns and trends. Immediate action is taken to address any issues raised by this monitoring (NMS 21.2)
- ensure that all staff's work is consistent with these Regulations and NMS, and the home's policies and procedures, with specific regard to meeting the frequency of supervision as defined in the home's policy. (NMS 21.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Young people with complex emotional needs form strong attachments in this home. They develop positive relationships with the staff team, key workers, independent visitors and each other. As young people build their trust in the adults who care for them, they develop emotional stability that promotes their confidence and self-esteem.

Young people make excellent progress in understanding their history and backgrounds, enabling them to develop a sense of identity and a positive self-view. This progress, along with the strong attachments, underpins their achievements in all areas of their development.

All young people attend and engage well in education. External education professionals say that individuals make good transitions from starting points of non-attendance or alternative provision into mainstream schools. They give examples of young people who have successfully reintegrated into mainstream education and achieved end of key stage results at the expected levels for their age group. Young people develop friendships in school, widening their peer groups beyond the scope of the home. The impact of positive attachments and increasing self-confidence is that young people are emotionally available to learn. This leads to outstanding educational progress.

Young people access a range of health services, tailored to meet their individual needs. They benefit from good physical health and they access the support they

need to promote their emotional and mental health and well-being.

Each young person contributes to the home by completing tasks that enhance group living, such as helping to prepare meals, make drinks, setting the table and clearing away. They contribute to the wider community through their attendance of community groups and clubs, before and after-school clubs and hosting events in the home. They integrate well with a wide range of community members, giving them excellent opportunities to develop an understanding of different social groups. Young people particularly enjoy inviting their friends and families and local community members to the Christmas party and the summer garden party. As a result of these opportunities, young people do not feel isolated from society. The positive relationships serve to de-stigmatise and challenge preconceived ideas of children in care.

Young people have good opportunities to see friends, family and those who are important to them. They say they are able to invite friends to the home and they have dedicated space and privacy to meet with their friends and family. Some young people have independent visitors, which further enhances their experiences outside of the home

Quality of care

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

Professionals and parents have very positive views of the care staff provide for young people. A parent said: 'I think the care is superb. It is the best care we have experienced since our son has been looked after. I really think they are outstanding.' A professional working with the home said: 'They provide a very high quality of care; of all the residential homes they are one of the best.'

Staff in this home understand the importance of developing trusting and mutually respectful relationships with young people. They provide firm boundaries and expectations so that young people feel secure. Staff role model positive interactions; supporting young people to develop a sense of responsibility towards others within the group living environment.

The staff promote a culture of open discussion, honesty and constructive challenge. As a consequence, young people are happy to express their views and opinions and feel that staff listen and act upon them. Young people know how to make a complaint; they also access a system of 'I want you to know' forms. This enables them to raise lower level issues in a formalised way. Young people have not made any complaints in the year since the full inspection.

Young people have individual placement and care plans. Staff complete monthly reviews of the care plans, which promotes the identification of progress, engagement with specialist services, further support required and targets for individuals to work towards. The planning is highly personalised; staff regularly ask young people for their views and what staff could do to improve the quality of care. Staff identify

young people's cultural and religious needs and preferences. They work hard to support individuals to develop a strong sense of identity and self-worth, through direct work such as life stories.

Staff in the home have excellent links with external professionals, such as the nurse for looked after children, local general practitioners and mental health professionals. They develop effective partnership working with health professionals to support all aspects of young people's physical and mental health. Staff utilise advice and guidance from external health professionals to build their own knowledge of effective strategies to use in the home. This demonstrates that staff adopt consistent approaches that help to build young people's emotional resilience and understanding.

The medication is securely stored and administered. However, the recording systems are ineffective; errors in stock counts demonstrate that the current system is not robust.

The staff team have high aspirations for every young person. Staff advocate firmly on behalf of individuals to ensure that they access their rights to education that meets their needs. The staff have good knowledge of the levels young people are working at, which is fundamental in supporting individuals to reach their potential. Staff talk about the creative ways they encourage young people's curiosity, stimulating their desire to learn. They give examples of watching films at the cinema and then encouraging young people to read the books on which the films are based. Staff set expectations of attendance and engagement in education. This creates a culture in the home that education is the norm. This positively impacts on new admissions. An education professional said: 'Staff are proactive at putting strategies in place to support young people to overcome obstacles, promoting their achievement educationally.'

Young people say they take part in clubs in the local community and at school. Staff view each young person as an individual and encourage them to take up activities that interest them. Young people participate in boxing, scouts, music clubs, church youth groups and gymnastics. They enjoy activities based in the home, such as art and crafts and games. They also participate in camping holidays away from the home where they can experience activities such as climbing and abseiling. The variety of opportunities promotes their skill development and scope for social interaction outside of their peer group in the home.

The home is well maintained, with a homely and welcoming atmosphere. Despite the large size of the home, it is personalised and provides young people with the space and resources they need.

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 in the home. Most say bullying is not an issue for them. Those who said there have been some incidents of bullying said they were

happy that staff dealt with them well. Professionals working with the home say that staff promote young people's safety. They confirm there are no issues of risk taking behaviours, such as drugs, smoking or alcohol use.

Staff understand how to identify and report concerns of abuse; showing awareness of procedures to follow. The manager uses tracking systems to identify patterns and trends in incidents. This helps staff to understand triggers and to reflect on behaviour with the young people.

Missing from care and unauthorised absence is very rare in this home, with only two incidents in the year since the last inspection. Staff ensure they complete a return interview and that they involve the police, who have made visits to the home to interview young people. This has supported the young people concerned in ensuring that they are aware of the safety implications of going missing; there have been no further incidents.

Staff use restraint to prevent young people from hurting themselves, others or from causing significant damage to property. Young people confirm that staff only use restraint when it is absolutely necessary and they are clear on the reasons for restraint. They say that staff discuss incidents with them and help them to reflect on how they could behave differently in the future. However, the recording of restraint does not consistently demonstrate the justification. Exploration during the inspection concluded that there is no inappropriate use of restraint, but the records do not provide the information required by regulation. Some of the records do not have the last name of the staff member involved. This shortfall does not impact on young people's safety but it does not provide the clarity required. Staff do not consistently record whether they have offered medical intervention to young people following a restraint. This means that it is not clear whether young people have been given the opportunity to make this decision for themselves.

Sanctions are fair and proportionate. Young people say that they feel fairly treated when they behave in a negative way. They talk about how they help to make amends; not just through monetary sanctions but also by helping others. This means young people are not managed in a punitive way but are supported to think about the impact of their behaviour on other people. One record in the home, dating back to May 2013, alludes to a young person not having their dessert as a result of their behaviour. The time lapse makes it difficult to pursue this and young people did not raise it as a concern. However, the manager acknowledges that withholding of food is not permissible. It is raised as regulatory shortfall to ensure that the manager reminds all staff of appropriate sanctions and responses to behaviour. This is an isolated incident; the culture of sanctions and behaviour management is otherwise very positive.

The staff recruitment files show that managers follow safe recruitment procedures prior to commencement of employment. The home also uses safe care interviewing to establish motivation and suitability for working with children. This provides an additional safety check. The records do not state the number of hours worked, gender of the member of staff or whether they reside in the home. These are very

minor regulatory shortfalls and do not compromise the safe recruitment process or the safety and well-being of children.

Health and safety, and fire prevention and response checks are in place, promoting the safety of young people and those working in or visiting the home. The number of fire evacuation drills meets recommendations and external contractors complete regular servicing and checks of equipment in the home. Consequently, young people live in a safe environment.

Leadership and management

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

An experienced and qualified Registered Manager leads a committed and dedicated team of staff providing high quality care for young people. The manager acknowledges that there is a focus on promoting good outcomes for young people and recognises the need to develop some of the administrative practices.

The manager has addressed the recommendation from the last full inspection; to ensure that the learning and development programme enables staff to keep up to date with professional developments. The majority of staff have received training in social pedagogy, first aid, food hygiene, safeguarding and restraint. Additionally, staff have identified and attended specific training in areas such as play therapy. All existing staff are qualified to at least level three and the manager has the professional and management qualifications set as a minimum standard. This means that qualified and trained staff team care for young people, understanding and meeting their needs.

There have been no complaints received by Ofsted. The home has received a complaint from a neighbour, which the manager quickly resolved with no repeat complaint.

The manager has not amended the Statement of Purpose to reflect new staff. Additionally, there is an error in the description of the service. Therefore, the Statement of Purpose is not currently an accurate document.

External monitoring of the home is timely and includes consultation with young people and staff. However, the visitor does not consult with parents. This means the visitor misses opportunities to gain an objective parental view of the care and the additional safeguards this could provide.

The manager completes regular monitoring of the practice and care in the home. The monitoring considers the views of young people and professionals and identifies patterns and trends. However, the manager has failed to identify the shortfalls evident at inspection. While the monitoring is in place, it is not sufficiently robust which has resulted in missed opportunities to improve practice.

The development plan clearly sets out targets for improvements that will either

directly or indirectly support the progress and achievement of young people across all aspects of their development.

Discussion with the manager and staff clearly illustrates their knowledge of each young person. They identify the extent of good progress young people make in education, health and social development as a result of living in the home. Staff have high aspirations for young people, advocate on their behalf to support them to access their rights to education and services. The staff team are committed to providing high quality care and understand the importance of continually developing their knowledge, through training and partnership working.

The manager has increased the staffing, ensuring there is adequate staff cover available at weekends, which had previously been an issue. She holds monthly team meetings that have a focus on improving outcomes for young people. The quality of these meetings is enhanced through external input from professional agencies such as the mental health team.

Staff receive supervision but it is not consistently carried out at regular intervals. Staff say it should be monthly however the records indicate this has not been the case over the course of the last year. The manager recognises there are gaps and says that staffing shortages have contributed to this. Staff say the team is well established and supportive of each other. They also say that they can access informal supervision at any time.

The staff have good relationships with a range of external professionals, who all say that communication is a strength in the home and that this supports positive inter agency working.

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.