

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Elaine Clare
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is a 72-foot narrow boat that travels around the canal network. It provides care and accommodation for up to one young person with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home is managed by a private company.

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 provides an adequate quality of care overall with individual plans in place for young people. The home does not clearly detail a well-planned approach to meeting the educational needs of the young people. This has resulted in some young people not engaging or being unable to access the education being provided because of the home's routine.

Outcomes for young people are mixed. On the one hand, young people are achieving very well in lifestyle choices and not going missing from care. However, in terms of educational progress and good health being attained outcomes are only adequate. Young people do have a wholly positive view of the quality of care they receive in the home, they can identify most staff with which they have a positive relationship.

Young people are included in their care planning and contribute to how the home is run, for example they can personalise it to their own tastes. Young people feel safe in the home.

The Registered Manager can demonstrate that the young people have made some progress in their placement. The Registered Manager monitors procedures in the house well and rectifies any mistakes made by the staff, for example when an event was poorly recorded.

Young people are regularly consulted as part of the monitoring of the home. Not all care staff have a qualification in childcare and some are relatively new in post.

Notifications have not always been sent to Ofsted as required following significant incidents involving the 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
18 (2001)	promote the education achievement of children accommodated in a children's home, in particular by ensuring that the routine of the home is organised so as to further children's participation in education, including, regular attendance at college where applicable (Regulation 18 (1 (b)))	31/07/2013
25 (2001)	ensure that there is a sufficient number of suitably qualified, competent and experienced persons working at the children's home (Regulation 25(1))	31/08/2013
30 (2001)	ensure 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))	31/07/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure the home is situated in a location that supports its aims and objectives and proposed models of care for children and young people. This includes children being able to access external services, educational placements and to maintain and develop friendships (NMS 10.1)
- ensure records are clear, up to date and contribute to an understanding of the child's life (NMS 22)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **adequate**.

Young people have a good self-view and are totally content in their placement. Young people are happy at the home and display behaviours that demonstrate they take responsibility for their own safety. Young people engage in constructive relationships within the home and have developed suitable friendships away from the

home.

Young people enjoy good health and any concerns are promptly seen to. Young people engage with therapeutic services to develop their psychological health. Young people show an improvement in their choice of healthy lifestyles since starting their placement.

The educational achievement of the young people is adequate. Young people attend college education but are not always participating in lessons. While attending college is progress, the lack of engagement means that young people do not always benefit from a good enough educational structure to their day.

Young people make a positive contribution to the home and some are positively engaged in activities within the community. Young people have regular opportunities to acquire practical life skills to develop their economic wellbeing and prepare them for adult life.

Young people are supported with any arranged family contact to ensure they stay in touch with people that are important to them.

Quality of care

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

Relationships between staff and young people are sound. Staff engage young people in regular consultation at the home through a variety of methods. The views, wishes and feelings of the young people are taken into account in the running of the home. Young people are supported to make appropriate choices in their daily lives and receive explanations about why some of their wishes may not be acted upon. This ensures that young people are given the opportunity to contribute to the overall ethos and culture of the home.

Young people know how to make a complaint and feel able to do so. They have access to an effective system in order to raise a concern without having to first go through staff. This promotes their safety and freedom of speech.

Young people's individual care plans are well structured and of reasonable quality. Young people contribute their thoughts to their care plan and provide valuable information for staff to use when supporting them through difficult times. This ensures that young people's care planning is specific to their individual needs and promotes their safety and wellbeing.

Young people receive good health promotion and have access to specialist services, for example to support their psychological development. The arrangements for storing medication in the home are safe and effective. These measures ensure all their basic health needs are promptly met. Young people are also supported to help them understand their background and build emotional resilience.

Staff provide good support and encouragement to young people who have an education placement. However, staff do not proactively address challenges and barriers to education for young people. The home's routine is not organised so as to further young people's participation in educational studies. Appointments are made during the college day which result in long periods of time away from education. Care staff are educating young people as a good parent would, for example by visiting places of history during leisure time, but this is not always being recorded.

The boat is an old narrow boat which offers basic facilities and amenities. Conditions are cramped and offer little privacy while on board. For example access to the staff's bedroom is through the young person's room. A new toilet has been fitted. The home's location is, at times, exceedingly isolated with no nearby conveniences, or any means of travelling to any, as staff have no access to a vehicle. Commuting to medical appointments, for example, can take all day because of the boat's location meaning that young people cannot attend their education placement. The staff have addressed the need to make the boat more homely and comfortable by laying a new carpet and buying new chairs. The boat has obtained a new safety certificate which is valid for five years.

Staff encourage young people to be involved in activities. For example, outings to go-karting and excursions with staff to places of educational interest, such as the maritime museum. Young people are encouraged to go jogging along the tow path. As a result of this, young people's physical health is promoted and they have opportunities to develop their social skills.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people report that they generally feel safe in the home and outside of it. Good policies and procedures are in place that support managing young people's behaviour, including strategies in de-escalation, distraction and re focusing techniques. Young people have a behaviour management plan in place which clearly identifies all risky behaviours and the management strategies for both staff and young people to use. This means there is a consistent approach in challenging difficult behaviours.

They feel there is an adult they can talk to if they feel unsafe. Bullying is not an issue. Consequently young people feel protected from harm within the home.

The frequency with which young people go missing from home is very low. When they do go missing, the home works closely with the local police and placing authority and follows the procedures agreed by all parties.

Staff apply positive behaviour management strategies and frequently reward good behaviour with praise and impromptu treats. The incentive scheme in the home is clear and rewards young people's individually agreed targets. Physical restraint has not been used since the last inspection. Sanctions used by the staff team to address young people's poor behaviour are fair and reasonable given the circumstances.

All staff working at the home are carefully selected and appropriately vetted to help prevent unsuitable people having contact with young people. The environment is physically safe and appropriately secure to ensure young people live in a home that meets their needs and promotes their safety.

Leadership and management

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

A permanent Registered Manager is in place at the home. Five requirements and five recommendations were made at the previous inspection. These have been addressed. A good management structure is in place to ensure staff receive the necessary guidance to support the young people.

Staff receive regular supervision of a good quality and their individual training needs are met to ensure young people are looked after by a well-trained staff team. Not all care staff have a qualification in looking after children and young people, though some have life skills which they bring to the position. The Registered Manager and staff manage sensitive issues around family contact and placement planning well, adhering to the guidance put in place by the placing authority. This ensures the views of the young people and placing authority around family contact are consistently abided by.

The home has a comprehensive Statement of Purpose in place which is followed in practice. The home has succeeded in supporting care leavers through their transition into a more independent placement. The home also has a comprehensive development plan in place which is implemented by the Registered Manager. As a result of this, the home is aware of its strengths and weaknesses and constantly aims to work towards improving the service.

Young people are provided with a good quality children's guide when they begin their placement. Staff take time to help them understand the guide. This ensures young people are clear about the aims and rules of the home and what facilities are provided.

The Registered Manager monitors the progress that young people make and in some areas can demonstrate the difference the home has made to their progress. A placing authority feels young people make good progress at the home.

Records kept at the home demonstrate good quality monthly visits by an independent person; they regularly consult with young people to ensure their views are included in their external monitoring of the home. The Registered Manager carries out frequent monitoring of the home's records to a sufficient standard. Other records, for example regarding key work sessions, resident's meetings and when young people undertake education, have not been recorded by staff. Incidents which meet the criteria for external notification are not always communicated to Ofsted in the interests of safeguarding the young people at 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* and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes.