

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Catherine Ross
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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 home is managed and run by the local authority. It provides residential care for six young people aged between 10 and 17 years.

Overall effectiveness

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

This home provides a high level of individualised care for young people. The consistent and dedicated approach from staff and the management team ensures young people make good progress taking into account their starting points and make transitions into adulthood equipped with the skills they need for independence. Young people's needs and views are central to all aspects of how the home operates and develops practice. Young people are happy and relaxed in this home.

A previous resident said, 'I had the best time of my life there. They supported me with everything'.

There shortfalls in how the home keeps young people safe. Four requirements and one recommendation have been raised at this inspection. These relate to the recording of restraint, use of excessive behaviour management techniques, notifying Ofsted of significant events and avoiding the need for police involvement. These weaknesses have led to young people being at risk of harm.

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
17B (2001)	ensure where a measure of restraint is used on a child the record must include the duration of the measure of restraint (Regulation 17b (4a))	31/01/2012
17B (2001)	ensure where a measure of restraint is used on a child the record must include details of any methods used to avoid the need to use that measure (Regulation 17b (4b))	31/01/2012
30 (2001)	ensure if any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 5 takes place, they shall without delay notify the persons indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of the	31/01/2012

	table (Regulation 30)	
17 (2001)	ensure no measure of control or discipline which is excessive or unreasonable shall be used at any time on children accommodated in a children's home. (Regulation 17 (1))	08/12/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure the home's approach to care minimises the need for police involvement to deal with challenging behaviour and avoids criminalising children unnecessarily. (NMS 3.22)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

The ethos of this home is clearly centred on the young people. Young people make clear progress from their starting points, often in a short period of time. A social worker confirmed the significant progress one young person had made in education, behaviour and health having only lived at the home for a number of weeks.

Young people present themselves as confident and happy. Young people develop emotional resilience. For example, there is recognition of young people's strong attachment to the pets they cared for in previous placements or at home. Young people bring their pets to the home, where it is appropriate and safe to do so on the understanding they will take ownership of them, care for them and keep them safe. This helps young people understand responsibility and develop independence skills. Staff and young people have worked as a team to erect a safe place for pets to be kept meaning the wishes and feelings of young people have significantly influenced the running of the home.

Young people benefit from appropriate contact with their families and friends. They are actively encouraged to rebuild relationships with families. Where contact with family is difficult or provokes strong emotions, staff support young people in understanding their backgrounds and how to rebuild relationships with families. This helps young people in developing emotional resilience and knowledge and understanding of their background.

Young people get advice and guidance with regards to their health and well-being. Staff work closely with child and adolescent mental health team colleagues and the looked after children's nurse to ensure the emotional, mental and physical health needs of young people are positively promoted.

Young people who leave the home to move to independent living have been able to develop many useful skills. When asked about the skills one young person had learnt

while living at the home, they stated, 'skills to live on my own, patterns of behaviour, manners, how to talk politely, how to have a daily routine and ironing'. Young people who have moved on often remain in contact with the home and staff continue supporting them as appropriate. This means young people have an excellent chance to make a successful transition in to adulthood.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy positive relationships with staff and each other. An independent reviewing officer stated, 'Staff have been excellent and have demonstrated a commitment to care.' One young person stated, 'The staff are great. They will go out of their way for you.' There is very clear and positive communication and interaction between staff and young people. Young people said staff always take time to talk to them and listen to their views. They said there is always someone who will listen when they are unhappy. Staff provide a skilled and consistent approach to young people ensuring they feel secure and content. Staff know and understand the young people very well and are actively interested in their lives ensuring young people feel cared for. Young people are actively involved in their care planning ensuring their views and wishes are taken into account.

Where young people are not attending education placements, staff encourage them to get up and take part in daily activities so as to promote daily routines. There is also a strong emphasis on giving young people the opportunity to become involved with outward bound style opportunities. Appropriately qualified members of staff enable young people to take part in trips away from the home where they can try mountaineering, surfing, scavenger hunts on the beach amongst other things. This promotes young people's health, independence skills and enables them to develop a positive self view.

Staff work in partnership with families and a wide range of external agencies, such as healthcare professionals, social workers, leaving care workers and the police. A social worker said, 'Staff are very good at partnership working.' Arrangements for dealing with medications are safe and effective. Young people, therefore, are easily able to access services and support they need to meet their physical, emotional, social and psychological needs. Young people who are temporarily living away from the home are visited by staff and key workers to enable them to continue to have relationships with important people and feel supported.

Young people know how to make a complaint and have numerous opportunities to do so. For example, representatives of the National Youth Advocacy Service visit young people. Complaints are quickly addressed and resolved informally where possible. Young people are encouraged to reflect on their behaviour. Where this has caused distress to others, such as other young people living in the house, they are encouraged to apologise and find solutions to resolve situations they have created. This encourages young people to take responsibility for their behaviour and build positive relationships with each other.

Young people have good facilities, such as a pool table, art and craft materials, as well as a television and computer. They are encouraged to become involved in clubs and activities, for example, football teams or horse riding. Staff are knowledgeable and respect young people's individuality and show a good awareness of valuing difference. Those who wish to attend church are enabled and supported to do so by staff. The home has two separate lounge areas and a games room where staff and young people enjoy spending time with each other completing puzzles or playing chess. This builds on young people's positive relationships with staff. Young people are encouraged to become involved in choosing the colours for their bedrooms or choosing the furniture. This gives young people a sense of ownership and belonging.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people confirm they feel safe living in this home. Staff are competent in their knowledge and practice ensuring young people are safe and protected from harm. Young people who go missing from home are protected in line with the home's missing policy. Staff work closely with the police to protect young people. If there has been an increase or decrease in the number of missing episodes, staff discuss the reasons for this in one to one sessions with young people as well as discussing how to keep safe. The high quality of the staff relationships with young people promotes their safety. Young people report that bullying is not currently an issue in this home. They say that, when bullying occurs, staff deal with it effectively. Young people know that bullying is unacceptable.

Most young people's behaviour is generally appropriate and where incidents have occurred, young people are supported by staff to understand the reasons for their behaviour and how things could be approached differently next time. Staff are trained in restraint and de-escalation techniques and physical intervention is only used as a last resort. However, the central log for physical intervention does not detail the duration of each restraint or the details of behaviour leading up to the restraint. When young people show challenging behaviour, risk assessments and close team working is used to support young people to modify their behaviour. Creative behaviour management strategies are used to help keep young people safe. However, there have been frequent occasions where the police have been called to the home to help support staff manage incidents of challenging behaviour which has led to young people being criminalised unnecessarily. Staff have struggled to work with young people whose needs they recognise they are not able to meet.

When young people's behaviour is escalating, staff have guided some young people to their room to allow them some time alone to de-escalate their behaviour and keep them, other young people and staff safe. They have sometimes held shut the bedroom door for short periods of time to allow them to calm down. This practice was excessive and unreasonable and led to restriction of liberty. Furthermore, this practice was not written down in a care plan, behaviour management plan or risk

assessment and could have led to a young person being at risk of harm. However, for the majority of young people behaviour management techniques are safe, effective and encourage young people to understand and modify reasons for their behaviour. Young people confirm they are kept safe if any incidents of challenging behaviour are occurring.

New staff are subject to an effective vetting system before they start working with young people. Staff have a criminal records bureau check completed at enhanced level, identification checked and references sought. The home is physically safe and secure ensuring young people are safe.

Leadership and management

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

At the previous inspection, one requirement and a recommendation were made about recording of restraints and sanctions. There has been limited progress in this area. While restraints are now detailed individually in bound books, the recording of restraint still does not reflect the duration of each restraint, or detail any methods used to avoid its use.

A recommendation was made previously about ensuring the home was conducted to promote and make proper provision for the welfare of children accommodated. The home has also recognised that they have accommodated children whose needs they are unable to meet. They are working to identify better provision and have increased the staffing levels. Young people confirm they feel now safe where they live and a young person who previously resided at the home confirmed this too.

A further recommendation was made about improving practice in relation to young people going missing. Young people are now supported when they return to the house and take part in one-to-one sessions with staff. In these sessions, young people and staff discuss the reason for the young person going missing. In this way young people are now protected as far as possible.

Young people are cared for by an enthusiastic, motivated and dynamic staff team who are qualified, skilled, experienced and caring. They are well supported by each other and the management team. There is a stable staff team who clearly have the interests of the young people at heart. Staff are well trained in all mandatory areas. Records kept for young people are well organised and mainly kept up to date. New staff undertake the Children's Workforce Development Council's induction standards and confirm they feel supported with their induction and have been offered further opportunities for development.

The Registered Manager can effectively demonstrate a consistent and continuing capacity for improvement, communicating high expectations to staff and challenging weaknesses. However, a number of incidents requiring notification to Ofsted under Schedule 5 have not been sent. Notifications have been sent to other relevant authorities and, therefore, there is no evidence to show that this has had any impact

on outcomes for young people.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.