

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Gavin Thomas
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This local authority managed children's home is registered for two young people of either gender. The home facilitates assessments while providing short to medium-term placements including emergency and crisis placements.

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 overall effectiveness of the home is judged adequate but there are many good features. The home has been without a Registered Manager for almost thirteen months. However, during this time, the acting manager and staff team have sustained a very resourceful and nurturing environment resulting in good outcomes for young people. The acting manager has now been appointed as manager of the home and since this appointment he has gradually developed or introduced more effective ways of analysing data, reviewing the quality of care and establishing performance indicators. These systems are still evolving and more day-to-day practical initiatives are being created such as better ways of monitoring staff training, listening and engaging with young people more effectively and developing a management structure within the home.

Young people have not been in placement very long but their initial thoughts and views of the service are positive. Young people are already beginning to participate in various tasks, building relationships with the staff team, and showing an eagerness to attend education. Young people are benefiting from an environment which has a calming influence, giving them lots of reassurance and a safe space after experiencing trauma, upset and uncertainty prior to their placements. One of the key strengths of the service are staffs' abilities and skill in adapting to the range of young people's diverse needs and behaviour. Staff work well as a team and with all involved with young people to help stabilise young people's emotions which, more so than often, has a positive effect on behavioural management.

A total of four requirements and six recommendations are generated from this

inspection. Record systems need to be more accurate including: the accuracy of the admissions criteria set out in the Statement of Purpose, the health and safety risk assessment, and fire drill records. Improved arrangements are required to ensure that initial reviews are carried out within 72 hours following emergency placements and to obtain essential information such as consents to medical treatments for these placements. Communication with Ofsted needs to improve more; this in relation to the timing of informing Ofsted of notifiable events and ensuring that monitoring reports are submitted to Ofsted every six months.

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
34 (2001)	ensure that reports in respect of any review conducted by the registered person provide for consultation with children accommodated in the home, their parents and placing authority (Regulation 34 (3))	31/12/2013
4 (2001)	review the Statement of Purpose to ensure that the admissions criteria, particularly emergency placements and the duration of placements provide more clarity (Regulation 4 (1) Schedule 1)	31/12/2013
30 (2001)	ensure that all notifiable events are reported to the relevant persons without delay, particularly those events which must be reported to HMCI (Regulation 30 (1))	30/11/2013
17B (2001)	review the behaviour management policy which sets out the measures of control, restraint and discipline which may be used in the children's home to include specific details about 'prone' and 'supine' holds. Notify the HMCI of any revision within 28 days. (Regulation 17B (1)(a)(2)(b))	30/11/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the record of fire drills includes: the time of the drill, and the length of time taken to evacuate the premises (NMS 22.4)
- ensure that reports written for the purpose of regulation 34 of the children's homes regulations 2001 are supplied to HMCI at six monthly intervals (Statutory guidance, volume 5: children's homes, para 3.14)
- review the mechanism for risk assessments to ensure that the content provides

better clarity about a young person's holistic needs, particularly where these are rated as 'high risk' (NMS 4.1)

- review the quality and adequacy of records, in particular the health and safety risk assessment which makes reference to the use of CCTV and intruder alarms (NMS 22.1)
- ensure that a review is initiated no more than 72 hours after any emergency admission (NMS 11.7)
- accelerate arrangements in obtaining consent for a young person to receive medical treatment, particularly following an emergency admission. (NMS 6.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

The vast majority of young people adjust very quickly and staff ensure that they are accessible to help them overcome initial anxieties and worries. Emotional well-being is central to ways in which young people are supported in settling into their placements and good systems are in place for recording and monitoring young people's needs.

The complexity of some young people's placements does mean that there are restrictions or supervision arrangements associated with young people's contact with families and significant others.

Currently, young people are enjoying education and speak positively about learning opportunities since their admission. One young person said 'Everything is better here, I am closer to college and I haven't missed college since living here.'

Young people's primary health needs are being met including registration with General Practitioners, opticians and dentists. On occasions, some young people are admitted with risk-taking behaviours detrimental to their health such as inappropriate sexual relationships, alcohol consumption, smoking and substance misuse. Clear guidance is given to young people about the risks associated with these behaviours and they are encouraged to think deeply about the long-term consequences to their health. Young people are supported to attend or access health-related forums and appointments to improve their lifestyles.

During their stay, all young people are encouraged to take part in tasks around the house. This whole-house approach (staff and young people alike), ensures that cleaning, cooking, laundry and the general upkeep of the home is a joint effort. The menu reflects everyone's choices and meal times are an important time of the day for the house to come together. Independence skills are incorporated into young people's placement plans and assessed periodically for effectiveness and appropriateness. Young people make good use of community-based facilities including sport facilities, shopping and eating out. They also enjoy positive relationships with local neighbours as the home is situated in the heart of a

residential area.

Quality of care

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

The vast majority of young people coming into this service have very little or no time for pre-admission visits or to establish relationships with staff and other young people. This is because of the nature of this service accepting placements at short or no notice. However, staff are very skilled and spontaneous to young people's needs and work very closely with external professionals and agencies to minimise disruption to young people's care. One young person said, 'I love it here - it feels different.'

A well-developed care planning system is in place and individual plans are monitored and reviewed weekly. Young people's care plans are wide ranging with targets and procedural guidance for intervention and support. Emergency admissions are a function of the home. However, it is noted that when young people are placed in an emergency, initial reviews are taking place, but not within 72 hours following admission. Although staff communicate closely with external professionals responsible for young people's placements, the lack of initial reviews within the recommended timescale to determine the appropriateness of the placement also means that there is a delay in the home obtaining essential information such as consent for medical treatment.

The general expectation is that young people only stay at this home for short periods at a time. However, each young person is made to feel 'at home' and great emphasis is placed on engaging young people in the planning of their care and the running of the home. Young people are empowered through this and they very quickly show signs of wanting to make a difference to their lives and enjoy getting involved in tasks around the home. Social workers who completed Ofsted online surveys commented that they are very satisfied with the quality of care provided and ways in which young people's diverse needs are met.

Young people are encouraged to speak out about their feelings and recent complaints raised by young people demonstrate a culture of openness and transparency. The complaints procedure is accessible to young people and this includes access to agencies outside of the home. All complaints are taken very seriously and currently two complaints remain subject to further investigation.

Staff are extremely sensitive towards young people's emotional well-being when decisions around contact with their families are imposed. In addition, staff attend training on attachment disorders and use this as a team-learning opportunity. In turn, this increases staffs' skills in helping young people from a range of backgrounds confront and work through situations beyond their control.

Staff work very closely with external professionals including children and adolescent mental health service professionals. This child-led approach contributes to staffs' knowledge base of young people's needs and provides a strong basis for helping

staff champion and advocate young people's health and holistic needs during and after their placements.

Staff are very proactive in advocating on young people's behalf regarding education provision. This includes close liaison with educational and other relevant professionals. A dedicated study room is available to young people and when they are awaiting educational placements, staff motivate young people by keeping them occupied in meaningful activities during the day.

Young people enjoy the benefits of a modern and homely environment, which is suitably located for easy access to local amenities and public transport links. This supports and encourages independence which young person say is 'great' as they can visit friends independently. The ambience of the home is very warm and inviting and great care is taken to ensure that the home's appearance and presentation are well maintained at all times. This means that young people placed in an emergency are greeted with high standards of accommodation and facilities.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The vast majority of young people are placed at this home as a result of emergencies and crisis intervention. Staff are very quick in helping young people settle, giving them a true sense of feeling safe and secure. Staff make use of all available information and resources to create a safety net for young people, particularly where pre-admission meetings with the young person are not possible. Young people say very strongly that they feel safe at this home. One young person said, 'It's not like my other placement; it felt like a residential home there - too big. It's smaller here, staff are good and it feels like home, that's why I feel safe.'

Staff attend a range of training and development courses relating to safeguarding. Staffs' involvement in a number of external forums also develops their knowledge and skills relating to safeguarding and child protection. Staff say that they find these forums interesting and this gives them the opportunity of empowering their colleagues by disseminating useful information among the team.

Young people's risk assessments are up-to-date and reviewed regularly for effectiveness and appropriateness. Risk assessments take into account a wide range of factors and methods of intervention are highlighted. However, a standard format is used for recording risk assessments but in the case of high risk and unfamiliar behaviours, the current method of recording does not take into account the full extent of risks involved and preventative measures. This therefore does not provide sufficient information with high risk-taking behaviours such as self-harm.

Incidents involving young people being missing from care fluctuates and evidence shows that these are known patterns of behaviour prior to young people's admission to the home. Instant work is undertaken with young people, addressing possible reasons as to why they choose to stay away from home while negotiating boundaries

to help stabilise their behaviours. Preventative strategies implemented with a young person in recent months had a positive impact on their safety with a significant reduction in episodes of the young person being missing from care. Effective work relationships are established between the home and external agencies; this includes agreed protocols for 'running away and missing from home and care' with the local police.

Behavioural management systems are subject to regular monitoring and scrutiny of young people's 24 hour placement programmes and response to agreed targets. Individual behaviour plans are consistent with care plans and associated risk assessments. Staff attend annual training for keeping their skills up-to-date in implementing the home's preferred methods of de-escalation and intervention. Physical interventions are kept to minimum and when they do occur, young people are invited to discuss this extent of discipline. Approved methods of intervention include 'prone' and 'supine' ground holds. However, the home's behaviour management policy and procedural guidance do not provide any details about these methods of intervention and what is permissible if these holds are used while taking into account a young person's safety for the duration of the hold.

Routine health and safety procedures including fire safety checks are consistent and up-to-date, with swift action taken in addressing maintenance work. Young people's safety is maximised through high levels of safety such as the control of substances hazardous to health, the safe storage of sharp objects such as cooking knives and the routine testing of portable appliances. Health and safety risk assessments are wide ranging and regularly reviewed. The current assessment makes reference to the use of closed circuit television (CCTV) and intruder alarms. However, CCTV and intruder alarms are not in use at the home and are therefore not relevant. The thoroughness of vetting undertaken with new staff helps deter unsuitable people from working with young people.

Leadership and management

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

The home has been without a Registered Manager since September 2012. The acting manager was officially appointed as manager of this service in May 2013 and attended a registration interview on the morning of the first day of this inspection. The manager is suitably qualified and experienced, and has the relevant knowledge and skills for leading and supporting the staff team through some very challenging and unpredictable situations at times.

A very detailed Statement of Purpose is in place; this covers a very broad range of service provisions. However, the complexity of young people's needs and types of emergency admissions accepted in recent times are not fully or clearly included in the criteria for admission. This service is also focused on short to medium-term care including assessments for helping determine young people's future. However, one recent placement lasted for the duration of a year. Therefore, the duration of placements lacks clarity and undermines the ethos of the home which is primarily for

shorter-term arrangements. A children's guide is in place and presented to young people on admission. This guide is produced in leaflet form, making it user-friendly for young people.

Young people are supported by a very well established and experienced staff team. There are very few changes within the staff team and this creates a culture of consistency and continuity of care. Staff are extremely positive about the support they receive through management intervention and on-going supervision and appraisals of their work. The vast majority of staff have achieved professionally recognised qualifications relevant to their work with children and young people; a small number of staff are either working towards or registered to undertake this training. A new system is in place for planning, recording and monitoring training undertaken by staff. This system is still in its infancy but is already giving the manager a better oversight of staff training and development needs.

The manager has good oversight of the home and has developed mechanisms for monitoring the service, all of which are informative and wide ranging. The quality of reporting is clear which includes useful data and analysis of how the service is performing. The reports produced following monitoring by the provider do not make reference to consultation with children accommodated in the home, their parents and the placing authority. However, there are many examples of how this is achieved in practice and young people and those significant to them are constantly consulted by staff at all levels. There is also a time delay in submitting these reports to Ofsted at least every six months.

Staff and young people take great pride in the appearance of the home and all contribute to the upkeep of the home's fabric and decor. Even though the majority of young people only stay at the home for months at a time, they are encouraged to personalise their private space and contribute to the upkeep of the home.

Effective systems are in place for managing significant events and incidents. However, in recent months, there are significant time delays in notifying Ofsted of events as required by regulation. While this is a breach of regulation, action had been taken to address each event at the time of occurrence.

At the previous inspection, one requirement and two recommendations were made. The requirement and one recommendation have been fully implemented. Fire safety arrangements have improved by fitting a magnetic closure to the lounge door as opposed to propping this door open with a chair. The furniture in young people's bedrooms has been rearranged to avoid excessive use of trailing electrical cables. One recommendation is partially met but not fully implemented. The record of fire drills has been updated to include the time and length of drills and the length of time taken to evacuate the premises. However, the time of one fire drill and the length of time taken to evacuate the premises have not been recorded for the two drills carried out this year.

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.