

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	31/05/2012
Inspector	Pete Hylton
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	21/03/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This privately owned children's home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to two young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service 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 **inadequate**.

Young people make adequate progress at the home and are engaged in employment, education and training opportunities. Young people do not always benefit from access to a range of purposeful leisure activities. Young people have generally positive views about the home. The staff team work with young people in accordance with their individual care plans. Young people receive personalised and well planned care. Relationships between staff and young people are positive.

The health needs of young people are not effectively met. Young people are not able to use a telephone without reference to staff. Where young people receive sanctions, these are not appropriately recorded. Safeguarding arrangements in the home are inadequate. The safety of young people is not effectively promoted. Complaints and allegations from young people are not always appropriately responded to or recorded. Significant events are not always reported to the relevant bodies.

The leadership and management of the home is inadequate. The acting manager's own monitoring is not wholly effective. Although the staff are well supported, not all staff are appropriately trained. Records about staff are incomplete and missing the required information. The home's environment is not well maintained. There is damage to areas of the property and missing furniture from young people's bedrooms.

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
4 (2001)	compile in relation to the children's home a written statement (in these Regulations referred to as "the statement of purpose") which shall consist of a statement as to the matters listed in Schedule 1 (Regulation 4 (1))	05/07/2012
15 (2001)	ensure that subject to paragraphs (6) and (8), the registered person shall ensure that children accommodated in the home are provided at all reasonable times with access to the following facilities which they may use without reference to persons working in the home - a telephone on which to make and receive call in private (Regulation 15 (4) (a))	26/07/2012
16 (2001)	ensure that the procedure under paragraph (1) (b) shall in particular provide for - the prompt referral to the local authority in whose area the children's home is situated, of any allegation of abuse or neglect affecting any child accommodated in the children's home (Regulation 16 (2) (b))	05/07/2012
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, discipline or restraint in a children's home, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose (Regulation 17B (3) (a - i))	05/07/2012
24 (2001)	ensure that a written record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of the investigation (Regulation 24 (5))	05/07/2012
25 (2001)	ensure that there is at all times, a sufficient number of suitably qualified, competent and experienced persons working at the children's home (Regulation 25 (1))	05/07/2012
29 (2001)	maintain in the children's home the records specified in Schedule 4 and ensure that they are kept up to date (Regulation 29 (1))	05/07/2012
30 (2001)	ensure that if, in relation to a children's home, 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))	05/07/2012
31 (2001)	ensure that all parts of the children's home used by children are kept clean and reasonably decorated and maintained (Regulation 31 (2) (e))	05/07/2012
34 (2001)	establish and maintain a system for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals and improving the quality of care in the children's home. (regulation 34 (1) (a-b))	05/07/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure that children understand their health needs, how to maintain a healthy lifestyle and to make informed choices about their own health (NMS 6.2)
- ensure that children pursue individual interests and hobbies. This includes taking part in a range of activities, including leisure activities and trips (NMS 7.2)
- ensure that staff support and encourage children to reflect on and understand their history, according to their age and understanding, and to keep appropriate memorabilia of their time in the placement. Staff record and help children make a record of (subject to age and understanding), significant life events. (NMS 22.6)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

All young people are engaged in education or training. They make adequate progress in these activities and their attendance is satisfactory. Young people are encouraged to develop their career ideas at the home and are supported in researching areas of interest. For example, young people are encouraged to help staff check over the unit vehicle and also plan and prepare meals in the home. This means that young people are starting to develop the necessary skills for adulthood. This is further underpinned by young people completing activities on structured independence plans.

Young people also benefit from regular themed evenings in the home. A range of cultures are explored and they are encouraged to learn about different areas of the world. For example, a recent evening focused on the traditions of China. Young people were encouraged to engage in finding out about the country's customs, traditions and foods.

Young people are also encouraged to explore issues surrounding same-sex marriage, sexual health, drugs awareness and politics, amongst others. This means that young people are starting develop a broader understanding of matters relevant to them. Young people benefit from regular contact with their families and those are who are important to them. This means that they continue to develop an understanding of their backgrounds. Young people are supported by staff in making visits to family.

Young people make adequate progress in relation to their health. All young people benefit from regular access to appropriate services and are fully encouraged to attend all appointments and visits. Young people are aware of the local community and have formed some relationships with peers. However, there is a lack of structured activities for young people both in the home and the wider community.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy spending time with the staff team and each other. The staff team have implemented clear boundaries with the young people. The use of rewards reinforces the benefits of positive behaviour.

Young people know how to complain and are able to voice their concerns to staff. A clear young person's guide provides a broad range of support services for young people to contact when necessary. However, young people are not able to freely use the telephone. This means that young people are not able to make calls without reference to persons working in the home. Young people do not express this is a problem, however.

Young people are encouraged to share their views and feelings about their care. Regular meetings with key care staff ensure that these views are recorded and acted upon. Young people have an input into choosing the menus in the home. However, there are occasions where the diet of young people is unhealthy. Where young people smoke the staff do not encourage a reduction or cessation in these habits. This means that the health needs of young people are not fully promoted.

Medication is safely stored and effectively administered. The home uses a clear system of recording medication and this means that young people are given the correct medicines as prescribed. Where young people present with long standing medical conditions, the staff ensure that these are well managed and all health appointments are maintained.

Young people benefit from care plans which are up to date and regularly reviewed. Young people are encouraged to be involved in planning their own care. Daily records are shared with young people and this further contributes to young people understanding their lives in the home. Young people do not complete life story work in the home. Furthermore, the home does not support young people in developing and maintaining memorabilia of their time in placement.

Young people are encouraged to attend education and training opportunities. A young person commented that, 'the staff support me with education.' Where young people are working with youth offending services, the staff team have positive relationships. A youth offending worker commented that, 'staff are really good at supporting with appointments'. The staff team ensure that barriers to attending education are minimised. Positive relationships with external services, for example careers and education providers, ensure that young people's attendance and achievement in employment, education and training is promoted.

The staff team are able to identify the individual needs of young people. Young people are actively encouraged to discuss topics relating to gender, identity, culture and the diversity of society. This provides young people with a model of tolerance and understanding. This is effectively underpinned by clear recording systems used in the home.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say that they are safe at the home. Young people do not go missing from the home and there has been a reduction in unsafe behaviours. However, there are a number of shortfalls which impact on the home's ability to effectively safeguard the welfare of young people.

The majority of the staff team are trained in the home's method of restraint. Restraint is used rarely in the home and where it does occur, the recording of these incidents is appropriate and effective. Where serious incidents occur, the home does not always notify Ofsted. This means that the regulator is unable to review events happening in the home.

Where young people make allegations about staff, these are not appropriately recorded or reported to the relevant authorities. This means that the safety of young people is not adequately safeguarded. The lack of reporting to the local authority designated officer means that investigations into suspicions of harm are not appropriately completed. Complaints from young people are not always effectively handled. A lack of recording, investigation and resulting actions means that young people do not benefit from appropriate support when they make complaints.

Young people are given appropriate sanctions in line with their age and understanding. However, these sanctions are not always appropriately recorded. This means that young people and staff are not able to review the effectiveness or consequences of such measures. Staff working in the home are carefully selected and vetted prior to employment. Furthermore, young people are actively involved in the recruitment of new staff. This means that young people are able to share their views and feelings about adults who may work with them. However, where agency staff are used, there is a lack of information relating to their skills, abilities, qualifications and suitability to work with children and young people. This means that young people may not always be fully protected from unsuitable adults working in the home.

The fire alarms in the home are tested daily. This ensures that the risk posed from fire is appropriately managed. Clear risk assessments for activities around the home mean that young people benefit from an environment that is safely managed. Regular checks are completed on fridge and freezer temperatures, location of kitchen knives and the home's vehicles. Health and safety reports are regularly sent through to the organisation's managers and action taken where necessary.

Leadership and management

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

There were no recommendations or requirements from the last inspection. An acting manager is in post. There are, however, a number of shortfalls in the leadership and management of the home which have impacted on the safety and well-being of young people.

The acting manager has a development plan in place. This document identifies a range of improvements and provides clear timescales for their implementation. The acting manager completes regular reviews of the home and seeks the views of young people. However, this monitoring is not effective as it does not identify all shortfalls in the home's operation. Regular visits by the organisation's senior managers further contribute to improvements in the home. These visits have identified a range of shortfalls. The acting manager has acknowledged these and is implementing strategies to rectify the identified weaknesses.

The home's Statement of Purpose is not up to date. The staffing list in this document does not reflect the current staffing in the home. Personnel records of staff working in the home are similarly not up to date. The home's rota does not always reflect the actual persons working with the young people. This means that information required under regulation is missing.

The staff team are regularly supervised by the acting manager and these meetings are recorded. Staff benefit from regular discussions about their practice, concerns and issues for development. The majority of the staff team are appropriately trained. However, not all staff have received restraint or first aid training. This means that the safety and welfare of young people could be affected when untrained staff are on duty.

There are several areas of the home that are not well maintained. For example, there is a broken window and tears to a carpet. Young people's rooms are not appropriately furnished and there are discarded cigarettes in the garden. Areas of the home are untidy. The acting manager does not effectively ensure that the home environment is well maintained.

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.