

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Angela Whiteley
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is owned by a local authority and provides accommodation for up to eight young people between 12 to 16 years with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

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**.

Young people live in a caring and supportive environment and confirm they feel safe at the home. They come from diverse backgrounds and have very different needs and behaviours. Some young people recently admitted require high levels of support and supervision, while others are unaccompanied young people seeking asylum, whose first language is not English. Some are preparing for independence, while others do not fully engage with services.

Most young people make good progress across all aspects of their welfare and development. However, some compromise their progress by making their own decisions about key areas of their lives. For example, some young people are not fully engaging with education and not attending medical appointments which restrict their future opportunities.

Young people are consulted about all aspects of their care. Their views carry weight ensuring their needs are central to the smooth running of the home; as a result, changes occur for their benefit. They comment positively on the quality of care they receive and the strength of their relationship with staff.

A committed and motivated staff team has detailed knowledge of young people, which enables them to meet their complex needs. Staff promote young people's individuality and respect difference helping them develop a positive self-image. Young people have personalised, well-planned care with individual development plans, and comprehensive risk assessments that are reviewed regularly to keep young people safe.

There is good communication between young people, staff and other professionals who have an interest in securing positive progress. A placing social worker made comment, 'that communication, planning and working together are good at this home'.

There are some inconsistencies in practice in relation to restricting young people's movements within the home, for example, locking the kitchen door when young people are not in education. Staff do not follow locally agreed missing from care protocols when young people leave the home without permission. The monitoring and quality assurance reports do not clearly reflect that young people, parents and placing authorities are consulted and that their views influence the running of the home. Further areas for improvement relate to the inconsistency in the recording of restraints and sanctions and staff's understanding of the use of appropriate sanctions and rewards. These shortfalls do not greatly impact on the safety and welfare of 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
17B (2001)	ensure that physical restraint and sanction records include all the required information, which is recorded within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline (Regulation 17B (3) (4))	06/11/2012
34 (2001)	ensure a report in respect of any review conducted for the purpose of paragraph (1) provides for consultation with children accommodated in the home, their parents and placing authorities. (Regulation 34 (3))	06/11/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure sanctions and rewards for behaviour are clear, reasonable and fair and are understood by all staff and children. In particular, turning off the electricity supply to all young people's bedrooms (NMS 3.8)
- ensure physical restrictions on normal movement within the home are not used unless this is necessary to safeguard children and promote their welfare and

development. Such restrictions for one child do not impose similar restrictions on other children. In particular, locking the kitchen door during school hours. (NMS 10.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Most young people enjoy good outcomes in terms of their health and emotional well-being. They have access to a broad range of specialist health professionals such as psychologists and therapists to enable individual health needs to be met. They receive good information about relationships and keeping safe from a dedicated sexual health worker. Staff recognise and attend promptly to health issues ensuring young people maintain good physical health. Some young people choose not to engage with services despite the support they receive from staff, which compromises their future health.

Most young people enjoy a balanced and healthy diet that they plan with staff. Menus take full account of the culture and ethnicity of young people and staff and use a diverse range of fresh produce. Some young people on semi-independent living programmes are supported to cook for themselves and others choose to purchase fast food that compromises their health and well-being.

Most young people make satisfactory educational progress from their starting point in the home and most regularly attend their place of education. The home has strong links with schools and colleges and communicates regularly to monitor progress and enable a consistent approach to young people's care. However, some young people refuse to engage with education professionals and staff who are trying to support them back into an educational placement. This means they are unable to achieve their full potential. Young people receive support with homework and have had opportunity for additional study time. This enables them to achieve at the same level as their peers, especially where English is not their first language and where they have fallen behind due to a history of poor attendance.

Young people enjoy participating in social and sporting activities of their choice that develop their self-esteem and confidence, such as swimming, ice-skating, football, gym and walking. This also helps them develop new skills and social networks. Some young people choose not to take advantage of the leisure opportunities available, preferring to make their own arrangements.

Staff work individually with young people to help them to understand the impact their life experiences have had on their behaviours. Not all young people are willing to accept that their behaviour needs to change or that risk-taking behaviours may place them at risk of harm. The home focuses on individual behaviour management plans, which is effective as there have been few restraints required.

Young people are encouraged to develop independence skills, including managing their own finances and weekly budgets. Some young people will be ready to live

independently in a few weeks.

Young people benefit from regular contact with family and friends. This helps them develop an understanding of their identity and family origin, which is important in developing a positive self-image. Some contact is restricted and young people are helped to understand the reason behind this. Other young people make their own arrangements to visit and stay with family and friends which is not always agreed in their care plan and may place them at risk.

Quality of care

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

Young people say, 'it's a really nice place to live' and they 'feel safe' living here. They receive good care from a staff team that they like and get along with. Young people confirm they can approach any of the staff if they have any worries or concerns and know how to complain if they are unhappy with any aspect of their care. Young people say they are listened to and as a result, changes have been made for their benefit, such as having allocated time slots for using the computer and contributing ideas to the redecorating of the communal areas.

Young people receive excellent care and support from an experienced and knowledgeable staff team that has high expectations of them. Staff are prepared to work hard to help young people develop their potential. They are persistent when faced with setbacks or failures and continue to support and guide young people to help them make positive choices in their lives. When young people do not engage with the home and other professionals and put themselves in danger, staff are proactive in contacting the placing authority and reviewing the placement plan.

Individual development plans clearly set out young people's care. Plans are reviewed regularly which helps to provide stability and permanence. Young people fully participate in all aspects of care planning which means they know what progress they are making and can influence the running of the home.

Staff are proactive and consistent in supporting young people's educational achievement and attendance. They have good access to health support services and respond positively to young people's diversity and cultural needs. Young people are supported to practice their chosen faith in the home and in the community. Young people benefit from a staff team that reflect the culture and religion of the young people in the home and the area in which they live. Young people participate in a broad range of activities and social experiences. However, not all young people wish to take advantage of the opportunities available to them. This impacts on the outcomes that young people can achieve.

Young people live in a comfortable home which has recently been refurbished. The provider plans to redecorate the lounge to further improve the living environment. Young people express their satisfaction with their environment. However, the locking of the kitchen during school hours, when young people refuse to attend school,

imposes a restriction of movement on all young people which does not promote young people's welfare and development.

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 and can talk to any member of staff if they have a concern. Staff are respectful to young people and have positive relationships with them. The staff understand safeguarding procedures and receive regular appropriate training. They are confident in implementing the policies and procedures if they have any concerns or allegations are made about young people's welfare.

Individual risk assessments and 24 hour management plans clearly identify risks for young people and the protective measures necessary to promote their welfare which helps to protect young people. There is a reduction in young people going missing from home over time. Most young people are well settled in placement so that very few young people go missing from this home. When young people do leave the home without permission, staff quickly implement the procedures and policies to assist a young person's safe and quick return home.

There are good links with the police missing person's coordinator with whom the home has a very good working relationship. Staff follow the locally agreed police missing from care protocol which is to report young people as missing from home when staff do not know where they are. Some young people choose to stay overnight with friends whose addresses are unknown to staff and when this is not agreed in their care plan. Staff have regular telephone contact with young people until they return home safely. Staff express some concern regarding young people who choose to leave the home without permission and who are refusing to engage with them. Despite their efforts, they cannot be assured of such young people's safety.

When young people are absent frequently without authority or are missing, staff have limited opportunity to develop positive relationships and build trust and respect to help meet their complex needs but are persistent in their efforts. Social workers say communication with staff and working together are good and involves regular sharing of information about young people's care. This demonstrates that the home is proactive in raising safeguarding concerns with other professionals.

Incidents of bullying are quickly addressed with individuals or in a house meeting to ensure all young people feel safe. This approach ensures that incidents of bullying reduce over time.

Staff are trained in the appropriate use of physical restraint but rarely need to use this, preferring to use humour and strategies of de-escalation which are more effective. This is demonstrated by the fact that there have been only two restraints since the last inspection. Some sanctions are institutional in nature; for example,

turning off electricity in young people's bedrooms when a young person does not attend school. This means that young people who are not subject to the sanction are sometimes negatively affected by this practice.

Young people enjoy a safe and secure environment. There are good systems in place which ensure all health and safety guidelines are followed and there are effective assessments of any hazards within the home. Young people are regularly involved in fire evacuation practices so they know how to leave the building safely in an emergency.

Leadership and management

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

The home benefits from strong leadership by a qualified and experienced Registered Manager and deputy manager who have clear expectations for the smooth running of the home.

A stable and highly qualified staff team are able to demonstrate how their knowledge and experiences assist them to implement development plans and provide support, to achieve good outcomes for most young people. They have good training opportunities, which equip them with the skills needed to provide quality care to young people. They receive regular supervision and support which ensures they have the opportunity to develop their practices to meet young people's needs. Staff say they feel well supported by the management team. Staff ratios are high with a balance of age, ethnicity and gender to provide positive role models. Any shortfalls in the rota are covered by the staff team to ensure young people are cared for by a consistent group of staff who can effectively respond to their needs. The home employs sufficient staff to meet the aims and objectives of the Statement of Purpose.

Young people's records are well arranged and generally present a good overall picture of young people's experiences at the home. Young people are regularly engaged in discussions about their care and parents and placing authorities are involved in the process. However, this level of consultation is not clearly reflected in the Registered Manager's quality assurance report sent to Ofsted at six monthly intervals. The report does not clearly demonstrate the home's good practice of obtaining young people's views which clearly influence the running of the home.

Effective monitoring systems ensure young people continue to enjoy a good standard of care and are protected from harm. However, shortfalls in the recording of restraints and sanctions mean that there is no clear evaluation of the effectiveness of the action taken to manage young people's behaviour. Records do not demonstrate that young people have had the opportunity to discuss the incident and the measure of control used. There is no evidence that staff and young people understand the reason for the measures put in place or accept that they are reasonable and fair. The manager is aware of these shortfalls and is taking action to address them.

All significant events are notified to the relevant agencies in a timely manner, which

ensures appropriate action is taken to protect young people. Other key documents are in place, including a comprehensive development plan that is reviewed regularly to help drive forward further improvements. The Registered Manager continues to strive for improvements in the service and fully understands the strengths and weaknesses of the home. Regular in-house meetings with other homes are attended to share good practice and discuss new developments and legislation. There are no outstanding requirements or recommendations from the last inspection which shows the service is committed to improving the provision.

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.