

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Elaine Clare
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is run by the local authority and provides care and accommodation for up to six boys or girls. The home is registered to care for young people with emotional or 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 **adequate**.

Young people are generally happy at the setting, and professionals working with them are also complimentary about the service. Children and young people are relaxed and comfortable around the staff and positive in their views of how staff keep them safe. Children and young people enjoy a good lifestyle and are fully supported by staff to access the local community. Strengths include a range of activities that are thoroughly enjoyed by the young people, excellent relationships with staff, and many examples of very good progress made, such as returning to mainstream education from a part-time alternative provision. The setting also has high-standard individualised care plans, especially relating to risks and behaviour management.

The children's home overall provides an adequate quality of care, safeguarding and leadership and management. There are a number of areas for improvement, including poor monitoring of practices, implementation of the bullying policy, lack of a homely atmosphere, lack of educational resources to support learning and failure to include all details within the Statement of Purpose. The weaknesses do not impact negatively on children and young people's welfare or safety

The home strives to embrace equality and diversity. This means that children and young people are supported to achieve a sense of personal identity. All young people attend school or college and are achieving and gaining qualifications.

The Registered Manager and staff have sound policies and structures in place in managing to care for young people; this is largely down to good leadership and an

experienced staff team. However, there are limitations as to how far this can succeed and a different approach is now required to promote better outcomes for young people at the home.

Most young people have positive views about the staff and good relationships with them. Their views about the home vary; sometimes they are positive and at other times they are unhappy and wish they could go somewhere else. This is largely down to the dynamics in the home between the residents and not the direct care provided by the staff team.

Overall young people are safer at the home than they were in their previous situations because they do not engage in risk-taking behaviour away from the home. However, young people do not always state that they feel safe at the home due to the potential threat posed from other residents. Staff manage times of conflict well and there is minimal use of restraint and this results in young people feeling less anxious about the home knowing that staff can gain control.

Shortfalls exist in the recording of allegations made by young people that have been retracted, and young people not being involved in developing and understanding their placement plans. The external monitoring of the home has not been consistent and has also missed important information around fire checks. There has been no up-to-date training around bullying, even though this a current issue for some 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
4 (2001)	compile a Statement of Purpose which shall consist of a statement of all matters listed in Schedule 1, with particular regards to staffing qualifications and use of surveillance in the home (Regulation 4(1))	30/11/2013
16 (2001)	prepare and implement, as required, a written policy on the prevention of bullying (Regulation 16(4)(a))	30/11/2013
18 (2001)	promote the educational achievement of children accommodated in the children's home;: in particular, by ensuring that the children make use of educational facilities appropriate to their age, aptitude, needs, interests and potential. (Regulation 18 (1) (a))	30/11/2013
22 (2001)	ensure monitoring devices are not used in a children's home except for the purpose of safeguarding and where the child's placing authority consents to the use of the measure.	30/11/2013

	(Regulation 22 (1) (a))	
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))	30/11/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure children's views, wishes and feelings are acted upon, in the day- to- day running of the home and important decisions in the child's life,, with particular regards to placement plans (NMS 1.1)
- ensure there is a good quality learning and development programme to keep staff up to date with professional and legal developments,, with particular regards to preventing bullying (NMS 18.1)
- ensure there is a clear and comprehensive summary of any allegations made against a particular member of staff (NMS 20.7)
- ensure visits carried out under Regulation 33 include relevant checks set out in regulations and guidance,, in particular the fire log book (NMS 21.7)
- ensure that reports reviewing the quality of care under Regulation 34 are supplied to Ofsted at six-monthly intervals within 28 days of completion.
(Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph 3.14)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **adequate**.

Overall outcomes for young people at the home are adequate. Young people struggle to maintain age-appropriate friendships and lack confidence in peer group situations. Young people have made good progress since the beginning of their placement to form and sustain relationships with staff and adults that are close to them. Professionals, who have known the young people for some time, recognise the positive steps forward taken by the young people at this placement. Young people enjoy the stability and consistency provided by the home. Young people have developed the ability, during this placement, to engage with staff to discuss and reflect on their own actions.

All young people attend school and good make use of the educational facilities they are enrolled in. This is key to their learning and future prospects. Young people have had episodes of missed education in the past due to an unsettled history and difficult circumstances; however, the home has successfully managed to engage them. Young people make good progress at school and complete work to a good standard. Young people have gained qualifications that previously would not have been

possible without the dedication of staff to help the young people succeed.

All the young people enjoy a reasonable range of constructive leisure activities and trips. They also benefit from plenty of fresh air and physical exercise. One young person said, 'I really enjoy rugby', and another stated he went to army cadets.

All the young people are in general good health. However, some young people do have some emotional difficulties and they are waiting to receive specialist support to address this and consequently issues remain prominent for them.

The young people particularly enjoy the homemade, nutritious meals provided at this home. They benefit from plenty of fresh vegetables, salad and fruit. One young person said, 'A lot of the staff here are really good cooks.'

Some of the young people state that bullying has sometimes occurred. Young people have been subject to physical assault and taunting within their home. The staff are fully aware of the issues and have put strategies in place, including increasing staffing when all the young people are in the house together. Risk-taking behaviour away from the home is rare and young people do not go missing and do not put themselves at risk of danger elsewhere.

Young people have regular opportunities for family contact within the agreed plans authorised by their placing authority. This allows young people to maintain strong links with their family members. Some young people show good independence skills and will often catch public transport to meet with their family. This ensures that young people stay in touch with people that are important to them and their cultural heritage.

Good opportunities are available for young people to learn life skills and independence training at the home. Young people are engaged in training appropriate to their age to develop their life skills. As a result they receive care which helps them to prepare for adulthood and towards achieving economic well-being.

Quality of care

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

Staff have strong relationships with the young people. There is a good balance of age and gender across the team, which provides consistent and thoughtful care. Staff give a lot of encouragement to the young people and regular praise for their good behaviour. Young people have good relationships with the staff team and feel that staff are concerned for their welfare.

Regular opportunities are provided, by staff and the two Regulation 33 visitors, for the young people to offer their views on living at the home. Young people vary their views on living at the home and their relationship with others that live with them. Sometimes this can be positive and other times they are unhappy with the situation. Staff will regularly facilitate mediation meetings between the young people in an

effort to maintain good relationships and provide a positive experience for everyone living at the home.

There is a system for young people to make a complaint and voice their opinions. The Registered Manager states she takes all complaints made by young people seriously;; however, this could not be tested because the last recorded complaint made by young people was in March 2008. Young people state if they are unhappy about anything they speak with their key worker or the Registered Manager and issues get resolved.

Placement plans are detailed and individualised to each young person. Comprehensive behaviour management plans and risk assessments are in place to protect the young people and promote positive behaviour. Good amounts of key worker sessions follow up young people's personal issues identified in their care plan, as well as to discuss any recent concerns with their progress. Young people stated, 'what is a placement plan?' One young person confirmed they are not central to their care planning because they felt not fully involved in the process.

Staff are consistent in supporting the educational achievement of young people. Staff are successful in promoting the attendance of all young people at school despite the young people's lack of motivation at times. As a result, young people have good attendance at school. Young people use the internet at the local library as the one computer for the young people's use at the home is ineffective in supporting their educational and social needs. Therefore young people do not have educational facilities in the home to support their learning.

Thorough health plans are in place for all the young people. They are registered with local practitioners and have all the basic health needs met. Referrals to specialist services have been made to support the young people and staff team; however, young people are waiting to be seen, and their health concerns remain difficult for them. Staff are meeting the young people's needs through support and guidance during this waiting period. The arrangements for storing and administering medication at the home are sound.

Equality and diversity issues are clearly identified in care planning and addressed in daily living. Staff attend regular training to support young people in this area. Young people are free to make their own choices and have the same opportunities available to them as all children in the local area.

There are some measures used in the home that impacts on children's privacy. This is the use of door alarms as listening devices. Where door alarms are used consent from social workers has not been obtained to ensure children's rights and possible compromises to privacy are promoted and respected. The use of this surveillance is also not included with the home's Statement of Purpose.

The home is well maintained but is untidy and does not provide a comfortable homely environment for the young people to live in. Some young people's bedroom's have a grey tiled floor covering and there are odd pieces of furniture in the lounge.

One young person spent two hours cleaning his room, prior to moving in the following weekend. Young people personalise and decorate their own rooms. This demonstrates a sense of belonging to the home and their engagement with the placement.

A range of purposeful and enjoyable activities are available to the young people to participate in. Staff are happy to support them in any worthwhile activity they choose, for example, youth clubs, drama lessons and dance class. This ensures young people receive a good level of support to socialise with peers. As well as opportunities to develop new skills that will broaden their experiences and develop their self-confidence, young people spent one night away camping during the summer holidays.

Staff work positively with other agencies and professionals; however, at this point in time the home has not been able to secure positive outcomes for the majority of the young people at the home. Although the staff team works hard and the home has all the correct processes they are reflecting on the problems and devising better practice as a result.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people have reported on a number of occasions that they are scared and intimidated by other residents. The home is proactive in its response to this and has increased the staffing levels to ensure that there are appropriate levels of supervision in place at all times. However, long-term solutions to the situation are not in place.

Young people do not build and maintain positive relationships with each other. This causes a great deal of discontentment and they will exhibit behaviour in the home that is harmful to themselves and others as a result of this. Staff understand the problem and are starting to take action; young people feel confident about raising the issue with staff members.

All young people have access to a phone at the home to make calls without having to first go through staff. Young people are also helped to understand how to keep themselves safe when using the internet or social media.

There are positive behaviour management strategies in place for young people outside of the home. There are very few cases of young people going missing from home and no serious incidents within the local community involving the police. There are also minimal incidents of restraint at the home. Therefore, the young people are protected from harm in many ways, and in some areas they have made positive steps from their situation at previous placements.

Positive behaviour management strategies are in place at the home. Individualised rewards systems are tailored to the targets of each child. Frequent positive consequences are used to reinforce good behaviour and personal achievements. The

home uses sanctions fairly. In addition there is a key worker session to discuss the problem or a piece of research by the young person to explore the dangers of their actions.

Investigations into safeguarding concerns have been handled efficiently. The home ensures that all the necessary information is passed to the appropriate parties to make sure the matter is dealt with properly. However, on two occasions the correct procedures have not been followed. The Registered Manager explained as the young people retracted their statement almost immediately the detail of any allegation had not been recorded. This fails to keep staff and young people safe as it is not clear what the manager has done in respect of any concern raised by the young people.

All staff are carefully selected and vetted to ensure that unsuitable people do not work with vulnerable children. The Registered Manager keeps a record of the necessary employment checks to screen new staff who are allocated to the home.

All the environmental and safety checks, with the exception of fire alarm tests, are completed within the appropriate timescale to ensure that young people live in safe premises. Fire alarm testing appears to be ad hoc and not the required weekly testing. The Registered Manager addressed this in the staff meeting, and weekly testing was in place for October 2013. Young people regularly take part in evacuation drills to ensure that they know what to do in the event of an emergency.

Leadership and management

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

There is a permanent Registered Manager in post. The home also has two deputy managers in post and therefore there are suitable arrangements in place to provide sound managerial cover in the absence of the Registered Manager.

Staff receive regular supervision of good quality to ensure they are guided to fulfil their role properly. Generally there is a good amount of training available for staff to continue their professional development. However, staff have not received training or professional guidance on supporting young people with relevant issues such as bullying for some time, and for newer staff none at all. Therefore currently staff are not fully equipped with all the skills required to meet the needs of all the young people at the home.

Generally placing authorities are happy with the outcomes at the home. There are some areas where the Registered Manager can demonstrate the progress that young people make and the difference the home has made. All stakeholders accept that there are difficulties with the group dynamics in the home at the moment.

Regular monitoring is in place at all levels of management to ensure the home is run in line with the Children's Home Regulations 2001. While there are effective practices in place for monitoring the standards of care within the homes, the Regulation 33 visits are conducted twice a month by two different people. They have different

approaches and are not always communicating between each other on each other's findings. As a result, some information is being missed, for example, fire alarms not being tested on a weekly basis.

The home has not provided, Ofsted with Regulation 34 six monthly monitoring reports for the last two years. As a result, important information has not been submitted to allow for inspectors to monitor the home's progress or any arising concerns. The management team has robust systems to identify any concerns about specific incidents and to identify patterns and trends. Any issues identified are swiftly addressed, for example, increasing staffing ratios for more challenging young people who stay at the home. Staff are continually striving to improve standards of care and outcomes for the children and young people.

A Statement of Purpose is in place that details how the home aims to help young people make sense of their life experiences and regain a sense of worth and value. The Statement of Purpose does not include all the information required under the Regulations, in particular, the specific qualifications staff have in caring for young people and the use of surveillance in the home, specifically around door alarms. Therefore the document is not accurate and lacks clarity.

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.