

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Stephen Trainor
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Date of last inspection	19/06/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

A private organisation operates this children's home. It is registered to care for up to 3 young people, of both genders, from the age of 10 to 17 years. The home cares for young people 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 **adequate**.

Young people receive an adequate overall standard of care and they learn how to develop skills suited to building positive relationships. The peer group had recently increased to three and was providing some challenges to a newly formed staff team. Young people are encouraged to take responsibility for their behaviour but not all provide their fullest or best cooperation. Young people, with staff support, continue to develop skills that should help them to resolve conflict positively.

All three young people were introduced in an emergency. The home's management are experiencing some behaviour management difficulties due to the combination of young people living at the home. Staff skills have been stretched and they are not confident that they can promote the full needs of each child accommodated. Efficient maintenance procedures are in place for responding to damage to the premises.

The Registered Manager is coordinating plans and introducing new strategies to manage placements more effectively. Needs have been identified and plans are in place. Plans continue to be developed through on going discussion at meetings and reviews. The Registered Manager has a good awareness of all three residents' needs. Some aspects of each individual's placement arrangements are still to be addressed. Accessing better education arrangements and securing some specialist mental health support is still to be addressed.

Central to the Registered Manager's development agenda is the need to provide improved continuity with staff practice. The staff team is only at the forming stage. Management support is being coordinated to establish key working roles and

responsibilities. There are different partnership arrangements set up to support placements and manage risk taking behaviours. A police 'missing from home coordinator' provides on going support, advice and guidance to ensure suitable safeguards are in place. Partnership arrangements note that all three young people accommodated at the home have particular vulnerabilities that must be protected from exploitation. Some young people do not always make the right decisions and show that they understand the dangers and risks of leaving the home without permission.

The service continues to respond to individual's presenting needs to resolve conflict positively and safeguarding concerns quickly. The home reports serious concerns transparently. The outcomes of notifications are communicated to Ofsted. Neighbour concerns and complaints are responded to and records show what action is taken.

The home's manager was registered with Ofsted in March 2012. The staff team is new, with the home environment and culture still being established. The staff team show that they are keen to support the management philosophy of care. The learning and development programme is in general well -coordinated but has not kept staff fully up to date with professional and legal developments following extensive changes to the inspection frameworks. Specific safeguarding training linked to child sexual exploitation is to be attended. The local authority designated officer confirmed that there are no known safeguarding concerns.

Monitoring of practice as well as the home's operation and management through regulation 33 and 34 is established. Report formats have improved between inspections. Reports do not yet provide an in depth analysis of information, including the captured views of children and partners, to support continuous improvement and development. The home has a development plan that supports improvement. There is limited written evidence to show that the views of social workers, independent reviewing officers and other professionals supporting placements are being sought regularly on the young people's care.

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
18 (2001)	ensure the registered person promotes educational achievement of children accommodated at the home; in particular, all the children make use of educational facilities appropriate to their age, aptitude needs, interests and potential (Regulation 18 (1) (a) (b))	21/12/2012
25	ensure that there is at all times, a sufficient number of suitably	21/12/2012

(2001)	qualified, competent and experienced persons working at the children's home; specifically, staff and management are confident and can demonstrate that they can promote the full needs of each child accommodated (Regulation 25 (1))	
11 (2001)	ensure that the children home is conducted so as to promote and make proper provision for care, education, supervision and, where appropriate treatment of the children accommodated there. (Regulation 11 (1) (a & b)	21/12/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the care and support provided reduces the number of times young people go missing without permission; in particular, strategies support young people to consistently make the right decisions and show that they understand the dangers and risks of leaving the home without permission (NMS 5.1)
- ensure the home's learning and development programme keeps staff and management up to date with professional and legal developments; in particular, the new inspection framework, evaluation schedule and grade descriptors as well as specific safeguarding training linked to sexual exploitation (NMS 18.1)
- ensure the views of the social worker, independent reviewing officer, Local Authority Designated Officer and any other professionals supporting placements are sought regularly on the child's care and these views are recorded (NMS 1.4)
- ensure young people develop and practise skills to build and maintain positive relationships and resolve conflict positively (NMS 3.5)
- ensure young people are encouraged to take responsibility for their behaviour, in a way that is appropriate to their age and abilities (NMS 3.6)
- ensure the children's home only provides admissions to children whose assessed needs they can reasonable meet; specifically, ensure that the combinations of young people living at the home can be supported and managed safely at all times (NMS 11.2)
- ensure full and satisfactory management records are held in-house for all staff members transferred to the home by the responsible organisation (NMS 19.6)
- ensure clear and effective procedures are in place for monitoring and controlling the activities of the home; specifically, demonstrate how information within Regulation 33 and 34 reports, including the captured views of children and partners, is being evaluated and used to promote continuous improvement and development. (NMS 21.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

All three young people were introduced to the home following emergency introduction procedures. The placements of two young people are at a very early stage. Latest introductions have settled in really well. At this early stage young people are fully cooperating and keeping themselves safe. Plans are evolving and needs are being addressed. Best fit educational arrangements are still to be established for one young person. A health assessment linked to a specific test for one young person is still to be arranged.

The personalities making up the peer group can mean relationships fluctuate on a day-to-day basis. Some young people display challenging, aggressive and damaging behaviour. The new staff team under the leadership of the manager are working hard to maintain a compatible peer group dynamic. Staff do not demonstrate that they have the skills to meet the collective needs of all three young peoples. The group dynamic is subject to frequent review especially when linked to: presenting safeguarding matters, missing from home and unpredictable behaviours. Some additional staffing was needed. The need to further reinforce the staff team was addressed during the inspection. Behaviour displayed is having a negative impact on other young people as well as draining staff confidence. The Registered Manager agreed that there is, 'Lots of work in progress'. There is also consideration for an alternative placements for one young person.

Not all young people have acquired the skills to differentiate their behaviours to the different settings and situations they find themselves in. Setting and maintaining clear safeguarding parameters for some young people has proved to be a challenge. The Registered Manager works hard to ensure young people build resilience to their personal circumstances. The new staff team are supporting the management philosophy. The home's ethos and culture continues to be developed to meet needs and fulfil service aims and objectives. Staff persevere with their efforts to secure brighter futures for all young people.

There is a wide range of plans to support individual growth and development. However, some young people show intermittent cooperation and this continues to restrict progress. Behaviour management strategies are in place and are regularly reviewed to ensure they remain suitable. Young people do gain confidence in their placements from individual work sessions but changes to the staff team mean that some aspects of the key worker role are not as focussed as they should be.

Young people's education is an area that could be better supported. This inspection coincided with one young person still needing to access further education. It is acknowledged that the young person had only recently been accommodated., Hhowever, phone calls had not been followed up to secure a suitable college placement. Also the interim or 'best fit' arrangements for a younger resident were no longer suitable. Full time attendance iswas required if the placement is to continue. On going negotiations to complete a sSpecial eEducation nNeeds statement will clarify the exact requirements needed. There is liaison and communication between staff and schools which helps to keep educational arrangements on track.

Encouragingly, the young people have recently been showing greater commitment to their education arrangements.

Young people living at the home are treated fairly and staff work hard to support their individual needs. Some young people have a growing optimistic view about their futures. Young people usually select to follow a healthy lifestyle. Young people learn how to take responsibility for their health and make clear links between diet and exercise. Young people are familiar with their health arrangements and are aware of the contents of their health plans.

Pathway, transition and after-care plans are not applicable due to young people's age or the early stage of their placement. Social skills and independence training programmes are introduced through statutory review procedures.

Quality of care

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

Relationships between staff and young people are still forming. The Registered Manager shows great insight and understanding of young people's needs. As a result, young people grow to appreciate and value the efforts being made and learn how to work closer with all staff in planning their futures. The young people comment favourably on relationships to date with staff members. The new staff team continues to build their knowledge based on young people's histories. On going staff inputs will ultimately lead to more positive engagement. Frequent in-house meetings take place and these help young people to make better choices.

The staff team promote models of care and implement support to influence behaviours positively. Some young people motivate themselves well to follow their personal programmes. However, there are occasions when day-to-day arrangements and programmes are not followed. Some strategies being used to influence behaviours do not work particularly well. This is especially evident when the Registered Manager is off duty. There is a noticeable increase in incidents.

Partnership arrangements with three placing authorities are set up. Communication takes place on an on going basis between staff, young people, parents and carers, social workers and other professionals. Clear communication helps to reduce any potential confusion with the arrangements in place for each young person. Safeguarding is managed through consistent approaches, although some risk taking behaviours remain.

Developing educational potential forms part of the home's philosophy of care. Care staff emphasise the importance of young people gaining the best education. The young people show that they can commit to their education and improve their attendance records.

Young people understand how to make a complaint. They confirm that complaints, if made, would be responded to in full. A written guide covers complaints, with

information, guidance and contact details of agencies such as Ofsted, children's rights and the Children's Rights Director. Young people can differentiate between grumbles and serious complaints.

Healthy lifestyles are promoted to ensure young people can make informed decisions on how they can keep themselves safe. Support services including a looked after children's nurse provides advice on relationships and sexual health. Medication is stored safely, and records are maintained on the administration of medication. A controlled drugs register is maintained. An accurate medicines audit was provided. There are clear policies and procedural guidance and these are followed in practice. All staff receive suitable training to support health and well-being and this maintains the quality of health care being provided.

A central part to staff practice is maintaining the balance between organised activities and young people's free time. Efforts to reduce potential boredom can reduce incidents of missing from home. Efforts to engage young people in activities that develop individual potential and enhance learning opportunities can be restricted when only two staff are on duty. Activities frequently need to be changed or cancelled when young people display challenging or violent behaviour.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people confirm that they feel safe living at the home. They slowly learn to accept responsibility for their behaviour. The number of incidents young people are involved in reduces over time as they start to show more commitment to their placements. Young people understand the many forms that bullying can take and are equally clear about what to do if they have any concerns. Young people say that bullying is not an issue of concern to them.

Young people have suitable safeguarding and complaints information and they are made aware of the content of this information. Staff receive regular training to update their knowledge and have a good understanding of safeguarding policies, procedures and actions they should take when an incident arises. Staff make it very clear that young people will not suffer any recrimination if complaints and grumbles are made.

Systems for dealing with young people who go missing from home are well established and a protocol is set out. Risk assessments take account of a young person's potential to go missing. Young people do not always show that they understand the dangers and risks of leaving the home without permission. Relationships with local police are established. Reports made to local police are in line with the established protocol. The home's management hold frequent discussions with the local police 'missing from home coordinator' to review matters affecting the home. The 'police coordinator meets and greets each young person following their introduction to the home. This promotes positive relationships. There is increased vigilance from the police based on the fact that all three residents have

been placed at the home for the same reasons and are seen to be vulnerable. Detailed records are maintained each time young people go missing. Management review all incidents. Standard practice at the home is to provide young people with the opportunity to reflect on incidents they are involved in.

Staff uphold children's rights. Young people respond well to praise and there is good use of positive reinforcement. The Registered Manager monitors the effectiveness of sanctions. Sanctions or consequences when applied are not always effective. The staff review sanctions regularly and introduce new strategies to support behavioural changes. Respectful communication was evident throughout most of this inspection between young people, staff and Ofsted. The number of incidents requiring physical intervention linked to the present residents was explored. Staff are clear that physical intervention is very much a last resort. All staff receive regular and refresher training in positive handling techniques to ensure safe practice.

Good recruitment practice is consistently being followed. Robust procedures ensure each staff member has an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check prior to starting work. It is also evident that staff employed by the responsible organisation are constantly moving between homes. This has had a negative impact on the quality and consistency of practice. Good practice also ensures the vetting of visitors to safeguard young people.

The appearance of the accommodation is being maintained to a satisfactory level. Damage to the premises is repaired promptly. Health and safety are managed well, ensuring young people and staff remain safe living and working at the home. Regular servicing of equipment and routine safety checks maintain a safe environment. Young people know what to do in the case of an emergency and can exit the home safely. The key procedure to allow egression from the home was unclear to some staff and had resulted in some doors being locked. This was addressed by the Registered Manager during the inspection. Staff implement a range of risk assessments to identify and minimise hazards. There is an audit of health and safety matters carried out on an annual basis.

Leadership and management

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

The responsible organisation appointed an experienced qualified manager who was registered with Ofsted in March 2012. The manager is working hard to ensure the practice of the new staff team deliver good quality practice consistently. Staffing levels have not always been suitable to meet the full range of needs of the three young people resident. Collectively staff have little experience of working at the home. Some young people's unpredictable behaviours continue to create challenges and this impact negatively on routines, the home's operation and management. Some contingency arrangements were implemented to increase staffing numbers. Given some more time, the Registered Manager is confident that the staff team will be in a better position to meet the specific needs of each individual living at the home. The option of accessing alternative placements for young people is also being

considered.

The service remains child-focused; however, young people have not always provided their best cooperation and this has impacted on safeguarding, quality and outcomes. The Registered Manager provides a clear vision for how the home should operate. Practice adjustments continue to be made in line with a new inspection framework, new evaluation schedule, new regulations and national minimum standards. Further work is needed for both management and staff to be fully up to date with framework changes. It is the intention of the management team for all levels of staff to influence and shape the service with their ideas.

The home's management team showed that it is perceptive in identifying the home's strengths and the areas where it could perform better. The home's Registered Manager provided an accurate verbal assessment of the service, setting some realistic targets to get the new staff team up to speed.

Internal and external monitoring systems are set up and these support quality assurance. Monthly visits provide a snapshot in time of what it is like to live in the home, but do not sufficiently evaluate and analyse all processes and data to fully support continuous improvement. The full impact and value that living at this home has had on young people's lives is not fully represented within rRegulation 33 reports. The reporting format for rRegulation 34 bi-annual reports has been improved between inspections and now provides better evaluation of the services provided. The home has a development plan that supports improvement. Limited information was presented to show how the home was gathering the views, wishes and feelings of partners and those significant to children, including independent reviewing officers.

The young people have confidence in staff and know who is responsible for them at all times of the day and night. Night time routines can be noisy and disruptive according to the young people. Staff have access to training including level 3 qualification relevant to working in residential settings. Not all staff hold this qualification. Some specific safeguarding training linked to sexual exploitation would support staff in meeting individual's needs. Staff confirmed that they receive good levels of support from the home's Registered Manager. Full and satisfactory management records are not held in-house on staff members recently transferred to the home by the responsible organisation.

There is a system in place to notify persons and appropriate authorities of the occurrence of significant events. Suitable reporting was evident with regard to incidents between inspections. The responsible organisation informs Ofsted when outcomes of incidents are known. Records are kept safe and secure within the home. There were no recommendations set at the last inspection because the home had no children on roll. A concern was highlighted to Ofsted between inspections. Upon investigation this did not relate to the service. The home's management promptly respond to any complaints they receive.

Staff practice is supported by written guidance, policies and procedures. The home's

Statement of Purpose provides information in accordance with regulations. The ethos and working practices of the home, as well as the aims and objectives, are outlined, to give information to anyone who has an interest in how the home operates.

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 children's homes.