

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Deirdra Keating
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home provides care and accommodation for up to four young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties. The service includes an independent school in the grounds of the home. The home is run on therapeutic principles and privately owned alongside two other services. One of the other services provides semi-independent facilities for young people preparing to leave care.

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 make adequate progress in all areas of their lives. The staff team are committed in their approach to promoting positive outcomes for each young person. Young people feel genuinely valued and cared about. The relationships between staff and young people are based on trust and warmth, although management of young people's school attendance is poor. Professionals working closely with the home reflect that there are safe boundaries that have impacted well on young people who struggle to keep themselves safe.

The management team understand the strengths of the home and have plans for development. However, the temporary management arrangements to cover the holiday absence of the manager during the inspection are linked to some of the shortfalls identified.

An additional requirement is made to ensure the safeguarding policy includes a reference to reporting of allegations and concerns about members of staff to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) is always implemented. A number of national minimum standards are not fully met. The shortfalls identified include; the maintenance of the rear boundary fencing and carpets, the deployment of staff to best meet children's needs, staff training to support young people's cultural and identity needs and to understand the child protection policy, and the frequency of supervision for new staff.

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
16 (2001)	ensure that the home's written safeguarding policy includes a reference to the requirement to report any concerns or allegations against people who work with children to be reported to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). Regulation 16	01/08/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the home's procedures and protocols with the Police comply with, the Department for Education's statutory guidance on children who run away and go missing from home or care (NMS 5.6)
- ensure that the home is well maintained and decorated ,with particular reference to stained carpets and the rear boundary fencing (NMS 10.3)
- ensure that children receive care that promotes all aspects of their individual identity (NMS 2.1)
- ensure that management of the home is consistent with the home's policies and procedures in regard to the supervision of new staff (NMS 28.2)
- ensure that children are fully supported to attend school, college or alternative provision regularly with particular regard to the organisation and deployment of the day staff (NMS 8.3)
- ensure that staff are equipped with the skills to meet the needs of the children and purpose of the setting with regard to promoting positive identity and knowledge of the child protection procedures. (NMS 18.1 18.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are warmly welcomed and settle in well at the home. They benefit from stable relationships with staff and one another which has helped them develop self-confidence and social skills. Young people expressed fondness for staff and say

that they are fun, fair and kind. This has helped them develop acceptance about their individual circumstances. Young people are helped and supported to understand their diverse family dynamics. However, young people's understanding of their identity in relation to their cultural backgrounds is not fully enabled by all staff as they lack specific knowledge on this issue. All young people are supported with their individual contact arrangements and contact is at times held at the home. Young people benefit from good staff support before, during and after contact. This is appreciated by young people who report that they 'trust and respect staff who will always listen'.

Young people are supported in the management of their health needs. They visit required health professionals and receive some support in helping them take responsibility for their own health. They enjoy varied and balanced diets. Fresh healthy food is made to look appetising resulting in young people who make healthy food choices and eat well.

Young people are able to attend education at the on-site provision. While some young people have made good progress, their attendance generally is poor which is negatively impacting on achievement. Some young people are unhappy with their local authority care plans and feel that their views have not been considered by the professionals planning their care. This has contributed to frustrations and a lack of motivation to comply with the home's attempts to encourage them to attend school.

Young people benefit from activities of their choice. They attend community clubs including football and dance and this has helped them benefit from meeting peers outside the home and developing confidence in their abilities.

Young people are supported to develop some skills required for adult life. They learn to cook, shop and use public transport with support from staff. Pathway plans are provided and young people can move on to another service in the same organisation that promotes independent living.

Quality of care

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

Staff consistently provide an empathic and understanding approach to each young person, taking into account their unique characteristics and individual needs. This has promoted a calm environment in which young people usually treat staff and one another with respect. An effective reward system involves young people who contribute their ideas in the planning of incentives. This encourages young people to take responsibility for their actions. Staff genuinely value young people's effort and celebrate achievements and effort with enthusiasm and warmth.

Young people's views are valued by staff who facilitate house meetings, although these are not always held with the regularity stated in the guide. However two-way communication between staff and young people is open and ongoing. Young people know how to complain and all say they feel any issues will be resolved fairly and fully

by the manager of the home. Complaints sampled during the inspection are reported on well, showing clear responses and outcomes that are clear for young people to understand. Young people's ideas are valued and acted upon, they contribute regularly to menu choices and these are incorporated within weekly menus. Young people also take turns to make film and take-away food choices every week.

Staff aim to support young people's attendance in school. However, the organisation of staff providing school support is not sufficiently effective. This is partly a result of staff who are assigned to support young people also being deployed to undertake other tasks, such as office administration. Staff also quickly accept young people's choice to decline school attendance and this has resulted in young people spending long periods of time in their bedrooms rather than engaging in alternative purposeful activity.

Staff source and facilitate a good range of activities for young people in line with their likes and preferences. Staff are organised and dynamic in sourcing activity and the correct equipment required. Young people speak animatedly about the range of activities they are involved in and the social contact and enjoyment they get from these.

The home blends well into the rural location resembling a family home. The house is light, airy and freshly painted. Young people freely move between house, garden and the school. The house is clean and maintained safely and there is a planned refurbishment programme underway. However, some of the carpets are stained badly in places and the rear boundary does not prevent animals, such as dogs, having access.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The home is located to provide a safe environment for young people who have previously engaged in unsafe behaviours. Regular safety checks and risk assessments enable young people to move freely around the house, garden and school. Young people are cared for in a quiet homely environment where clear boundaries help ensure their personal safety and guide their behaviours and responses. Occasional sanctions are used to ensure young people can learn from their behaviours. Weekly reviews and key worker sessions provide a forum for reflection and discussion about incidents in order that young people and staff can identify patterns and triggers in their behaviours.

There has been a reduction in the amount of times young people go missing from the home. Social workers report that this has been of great benefit to young people placed and compliment the way the service has managed to keep young people safe in relation to past patterns. There is a clear procedure for young people who are missing and this is followed by staff. However, there is no agreed protocol with the local police.

There is a safeguarding policy. However staff are unclear about which member of staff is the designated child protection officer. It is acknowledged that this may be as a result of the recent changes in management. There is a procedure for referring allegations and concerns about staff to the Local Authority Designated officer (LADO) but this has not been implemented consistently. As a result relevant concerns have not been notified and opportunities to receive advice from the LADO were missed. However, suitable actions were taken at the time to ensure children's safety and well being.

The safe recruitment of staff is undertaken with strict adherence to guidance. This ensures that young people are cared for by staff who are suitable to care for them.

Leadership and management

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

The home is managed adequately. The newly appointed manager is well-known to young people and staff speak positively of her and trust in her ability to resolve any issues they raise.

However, the temporary management arrangements in place, to cover holiday absence of the manager, at the time of the inspection have contributed to some of the shortfalls raised during the inspection. The daily management of the home lacks leadership and organisation resulting in poor deployment of staff. For example, staff are deployed to other services without sufficient consideration given to the impact of this on their engagement with young people. There was a lack of clear planning with regard to the deployment of staff to effectively address the barriers faced by young people in enabling them to attend school, for example staff are undertaking office tasks rather than engaging with young people. As a result staff who are assigned to support, motivate and engage with young people and to get them to attend school are not successful in getting them to do so.

The monitoring of the home by an external visitor is carried out at regular intervals and the manager has submitted a full Regulation 34 report. This provides a good overview of recent months including patterns of behaviours. A development plan sets out environmental changes and a focused approach on internal reviews of young people is in place and provides a clear and objective view of progress. This has benefitted young people and made the wider staff group fully aware of the progress made and difficulties young people face. The implementation of internal reviews also demonstrates a sound commitment to improvement.

The recommendations raised at the interim inspection have not been fully addressed or understood. These were in relation to records of homely medicines and staff training and supervision. The records have been amended. The supervision contract for new staff states that supervision will be provided every two weeks and this has not been adhered to. This could result in poor practice affecting the quality of care for young people.

There are a sufficient number of staff who are trained or undergoing training. Induction training includes a range of courses that are refreshed regularly. Despite this, all staff are not clear about child protection arrangements in the home and do not have enough specific knowledge about the cultural backgrounds of young people that they care for. The staff group are diverse in age, gender and race provide varied adult role models for young people.

Significant events and notifications have been made to Ofsted, although two child protection concerns have not been reported to the LADO. However, records demonstrate clear investigations and actions were taken which ensure young people's safety and welfare. These are stored securely and records for individuals hold all required information about each young person's life.

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.