

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Deirdra Keating
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home provides care and accommodation for up to five young people aged between 11 and 16 years, who may have emotional or behavioural difficulties. The home accepts both planned and emergency placements and is owned by the local authority.

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**.

The young people make satisfactory progress as a result of the care they receive. They are positive about their relationships with the staff and benefit from the stability that this provides. Care planning promotes their individual life choices about how they are cared for.

Young people are safe in the home, they say that they feel secure and staff support young people to take responsibility for their personal safety.

As a result of this inspection there are 2 statutory requirements and eight recommendations for improvement. These include shortfalls in relation to the approaches to behaviour management. Some aspects of young people's daily routine do not promote young people's attendance in education. Some records lack young people's views. The manager has not notified the relevant people and agencies about a significant event. There are areas of the home that have an institutional feel. Staff are not all fully trained or supported in their roles. The acting manager understands the shortfalls and has taken action to address these and ensure that the quality of care improves.

The home has experienced several changes over recent months. The future management of the home is in question. There is a temporary acting manager supported by a strong staff team. There are adequate monitoring systems in place and the overall quality of care has improved since the last inspection.

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
27 (2001)	ensure that all person employed receive appropriate training and obtain further qualifications appropriate to the work they perform. This is regards to behaviour management training (Regulation 27 (4)(a)(b))	08/11/2013
30 (2001)	ensure that if any of the events listed in column 1 of table in Schedule 5 takes place, the registered person shall notify the persons indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of the table. (Regulation 30 (1))	08/11/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the environment and culture promotes models and supports positive behaviour that all staff understand and implement (NMS 3.2)
- ensure that all staff are provided with regular supervision by appropriately qualified and experienced staff (NMS 19.4)
- ensure that the home promotes a comfortable and homely environment this is with reference to the institutional feel of the kitchen (NMS 10.3)
- ensure that procedures for introducing children to the home; ensure children understand what to expect from living in the home this is in relation to the children's guide (NMS 11.1)
- ensure that children are supported to attend school, college or alternative provision regularly (NMS 8.3)
- ensure that the staff on individual shifts can fulfil the Statement of Purpose and meet the individual needs of the children in the home; this is in regard to the late handover of staff in the evening (NMS 17.1)
- ensure that the development plan for the future of the home identified the planned changes in operation pertaining solely to the home (NMS 15.2)
- ensure all existing care staff have attained a minimum level 3 qualification. (NMS 18.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **adequate**.

Young people develop an understanding of their unique backgrounds. This is supported by the relationships that they have developed with staff. Young people speak positively about key members of staff. They say that there is always an adult they can approach. This has helped young people reflect on their behaviours and feel emotionally secure.

Young people know what to expect from the home and staff and are accustomed to the routines and rules of the home. However, information provided for young people new to the home is unclear. This could hinder young people's comprehension of what to expect.

Young people are supported by staff to access their educational provisions in line with their academic abilities and wishes. Some young people go out to external provisions and others are educated at the home. Attendance has improved; although occasional disturbances at night have resulted in young people who being tired in the mornings. Overall, young people show a commitment to engage in education in order to make academic progress and plans for their future lives.

Young people access health services in relation to their individual health needs. They enjoy meals and benefit from a balanced diet. Young people are starting to take some responsibility for their health and well-being, with reduced incidents of unhealthy and risk taking behaviours.

Young people benefit from regular contact with families, important adults and friends. This is developed in line with young people's wishes, preferences and plans for the future. Staff support and facilitate transport and contact with families. Young people are supported well by staff both with the practical and emotional aspects of spending time with families.

Young people have limited opportunities to make a positive contribution to the wider community. Varied activities are regularly offered to young people. However, young people say they prefer to spend time with their peer group in the community where they can experience free time. This helps them build social networks outside of the home.

Quality of care

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

The staff are genuinely concerned with young people's welfare and provide individualised support to each young person. They know young people well and understand the barriers that young people face. Staff implement behaviour management plans that help young people contain their emotions and differences of opinion. This has reduced the conflict at the home. There are minor disagreements,

but generally young people accept one another's differences. This has resulted in a calm and settled atmosphere that benefits young people.

The staff have taken account of previous complaints from young people. This has shown young people that their views are valued. Young people talk about the changes in the home; they say that things are much calmer. This means they can relax in communal areas and staff are more readily available.

The staff are making changes to young people's routines following the last inspection. This includes sitting down at the table to eat meals with young people. This ensures young people are offered a balanced meal and have an opportunity to talk to one another and staff. Evening routines are also better, bedtimes are earlier; however, young people do interrupt one another at night which does not support young people to get a good night's sleep.

The care planning includes all needs and individual young people's cultural, religious, ethnic and identity details. Staff work to the care plans and use risk assessments to ensure that young people's needs are adequately met and they are kept safe. Staff in the home work with a range of professionals to ensure young people have the right support and barriers to education are addressed. Feedback from social workers highlights they are pleased with young people's progress and there has been a significant reduction in incidents.

Staff advocate strongly for young people regarding education choices. They listen to young people's views and work hard with professionals to facilitate young people's preferred choices. This has resulted in young people who are keen to make changes and demonstrate their commitment to school attendance.

The home is in residential area of town giving young people good access to the facilities. There is ample space in communal areas and parts of the home are homely and freshly decorated. However, the kitchen is dark and institutional. This does not encourage young people to use the kitchen and benefit from spending time with staff.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say that they feel much safer since the last inspection because the group dynamics have changed. The atmosphere in the house is no longer unpredictable or volatile. Young people appear happy and relaxed in the home, they spend more time at the home and have reported no issues regarding bullying. Staff remain vigilant and have a record to ensure that any incidents can be monitored.

Young people can identify an adult to talk to. The staff are readily available and the rapport between staff and young people is good. This means that young people are comfortable to approach staff with any concerns. This reassures young people.

Young people's behaviour has improved significantly since the last inspection. This is in part due to better consideration being given to placements less young people and fewer incidents. Strategies for staff to support young people are clearly set out in behaviour management plans. The plans are good, although, there are approaches to situations from staff vary. This gives young people reason to question the rules and is confusing. There have been no uses of physical restraint since the last inspection.

There is a reduction in incidents of young people going missing from the home. These are mainly when young people are out with peers and do not return at agreed times. The staff are adept at staying in contact with young people. They are proactive in recognition of triggers and working with young people to reduce these. Staff have very good links with community police and this helps monitor young people's whereabouts and ensure their safety.

The safeguarding procedures ensure that staff know how to protect young people from harm and promote their welfare. The systems are understood by staff who receive regular safeguarding training and can demonstrate secure knowledge. They know what to do in the event of an allegation or disclosure and this safeguards young people.

The environment is safe and regular checks are carried out on fire equipment and electrical appliances. The home is secure and visitors are closely monitored. Thorough checks on staff prior to employment in the home ensure that young people are only cared for by safe and suitable staff.

Leadership and management

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

The home has a Registered Manager who is currently on long-term leave. Interim management arrangements have been agreed and notified to Ofsted. The acting manager provides effective interim management with knowledge of the existing staff team and a good understanding of the home. This promotes continuity for staff and young people.

At the last inspection a number of concerns were raised by external professionals. These were in relation to behaviour education and general management of the home. There have been no further concerns raised since. In contrast professionals spoken to during the inspection highlighted that changes made by staff have improved the home for young people.

The statutory requirements raised at the previous inspection have been addressed. Placement matching has been reconsidered, behaviour management has improved and staff have been provided with further training. There is one requirement that has not been fully met this pertains to supervision of two members of staff although this has taken place on an informal basis. All other staff have regular supervision and support for their roles. Therefore while this requirement is not fully met this does not

detract from the adequate care provided to young people. Recommendations raised have been addressed. Overall, the staff team have addressed the shortfalls identified and this has improved the overall quality of care provided to young people. Particularly in relation to maintenance of the environment, a reduction in serious incidents and the promotion of education.

The acting manager and senior management team understand the underlying areas that require improvement. There has been a renewed commitment to fully meeting the needs of the young people. Since the last inspection, no further admissions have been taken by the home. This has created a stable environment and reduced the number of incidents significantly. This gives staff a chance to provide a better quality of individual care to young people. This in turn has boosted staff morale. Feedback from professionals noted that staff 'seem more buoyant and positive and this has been beneficial to young people.'

External monitoring visits are carried out with regularity and include consultation with young people. This ensures that staff practice meets basic requirements and provides an extra safeguard for young people. The monitoring is effective although, historically changes have not been made in response to shortfalls raised during visits.

Developmental plans detail wide areas for improvement that are generic and cover several homes managed by the local authority. These do not specify key developments for this home missing an opportunity to drive direct future improvements.

The staff team are cohesive and work well together. Staff work set shift patterns and the numbers of staff are adequate. However, the start of the late shift can unsettle young people preparing for bed. Therefore the organisation of staff does not always meet the needs of young people at the home in relation to settling at night.

Staff receive regular training and most are qualified to the required level 3 in Health and Social care. However, there are staff who are yet to start this training despite being employed for some time. In addition some staff have not had specific behaviour management training to support the pedagogic model used by the home. This can result in inconsistencies in the management of young people's behaviour and does not ensure that staff are equipped with the underpinning knowledge for the role.

Records are stored securely and these provide staff and young people with an overview of the daily events in the home. Most events of significance are notified to Ofsted, although, there has been one exception to this which could compromise young people's welfare and safety. Potentially this external safeguard to protect young people involved in such incidents has been missed.

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.