

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Deirdra Keating
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Date of last inspection	07/01/2013
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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 **inadequate**.

Overall the home is inadequate. Staff try to provide personalised care but this is not well planned as the placements change quickly and new placements unsettle existing young people. This means that the individual needs of young people are not consistently met and overall the outcomes are poor; particularly in relation to young people's behaviour, health and education.

Young people are very concerned about the issues in the home. While they are positive about the established staff team they share many concerns about the group dynamics, behaviour, activities provided and privacy. A range of professionals and staff spoken to during the inspection highlighted the same concerns and additionally the poor promotion of young people's education. Surveys sampled prior to the inspection also raised concerns. Shortfalls have also been identified in; record keeping, record storage, supervision for staff and the overall managerial monitoring of the home.

The relationship between core staff and young people is positive and provides some benefits although this does not help young people feel safe in the home.

As a result of this inspection there are 11 statutory requirements and five recommendations raised. The senior leadership team understand the shortfalls identified and have taken immediate action to address these and improve outcomes for 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
31 (2001)	ensure that all parts of the children's home used by children are kept clean and reasonably decorated and maintained and secure from unauthorised access (Regulation 31(2) (b) (e))	24/09/2013
25 (2001)	ensure a sufficient number of suitably qualified, competent and experienced persons working at the children's home (Regulation 25 (1))	03/09/2013
18 (2001)	promote the educational achievement of children in the home in particular by ensuring that the routine of the home is organised as to further children's participation including regular attendance at school (Regulation 18 (1) (a))	06/09/2013
17A (2001)	ensure that restraint is only used on a child accommodated in the children's home for the purpose of preventing injury to any person including the child who is being restrained; preventing serious damage to the property of any person and then only when no alternative method of preventing the event is available (Regulation 17 (a) (1) (a) (b))	07/09/2013
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control a written record shall include the effectiveness and any consequence of the use of the measure (Regulation 17 (b) (3) (f))	06/09/2013
17B (2001)	implement the behaviour management policy whereby appropriate behaviour is to be promoted in the home (Regulation 17 (1) (b))	06/09/2013
16 (2001)	implement the policy for the prevention of bullying in the children's home, which shall in particular set out the procedure for dealing with an allegation of bullying (Regulation (16) (4) (a))	06/09/2013
11 (2001)	ensure that the children's home is conducted so as to promote and make proper provision for the welfare of children accommodated (Regulation 11) (1) (a))	06/09/2013
4 (2001)	ensure that the children's home is at all times conducted in a manner which is consistent with its Statement of Purpose (Regulation 4 (6))	06/09/2013
34 (2001)	ensure there is a system for monitoring the matters set out in schedule 6 and improving the quality of care provided in the children's home (Regulation 34 (1) (a)(b))	06/09/2013
27 (2001)	ensure that all persons employed receive appropriate training, supervision and appraisal (Regulation 27 (4)(a))	06/09/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure that normal movements around the home are not physically restricted this is in regard to ensuring children have independent access to their bedrooms (NMS 10.4)
- ensure that where sanctions or disciplinary measures are used, children are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records kept by the home (NMS 3.18)
- ensure that records are clear and stored securely (NMS 22)
- ensure that entries in records are legible, clearly expressed, non-stigmatising and distinguish as far as possible between fact and opinion (NMS 22.4)
- enable children to understand their health needs, how to maintain a healthy lifestyle and to make informed choices about their own health. (NMS 6.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **inadequate**.

The overall outcomes for young people are inadequate. There is a culture of disruptive behaviour and damage to the home. Young people engage in risky activities as opposed to developing individual skills that would benefit them in later life. Consequently, in general young people feel insecure and lack confidence in their own ability.

Most young people do not attend school. Evening routines are not conducive to this which in turn affects young people's general motivation and stability. Night times are noisy and eventful. Young people report that they prefer to be away from the home because of noise levels and other young people's behaviour. This means that some young people do not respect one another or staff leaving others feeling unsafe.

There are young people who have managed to achieve well at school despite the home being unsettled. Although this is a minority of young people, this has been acknowledged by staff who have affirmed the efforts made by young people.

Young people's health needs are partly met. They are registered with health professionals and offered a balanced diet. However, young people smoke and some engage in substance misuse, at times in the home and with peers outside the home. This does not promote a healthy environment or healthy lifestyle choices.

Some young people enjoy their own space and take pride in keeping their rooms

clean. While young people like their privacy this is not always possible as other young people have taken keys from staff and entered their rooms. In addition key fobs do not work and this means that young people either have to wedge doors open or ask staff to open doors for them. This does not provide privacy or promote young people's independence.

Quality of care

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

The quality of care has been judged as adequate. While there are some shortfalls identified, in general relationships between staff and young people are adequate. There are young people who see staff as a great support. One young person who shared concerns about some aspects of the home said 'It's noisy at night. I am only happy because I get away but it's not the staff. I love being around the staff.' This identifies weaknesses in behaviour management and is partly due to the high number of agency staff that young people do not know. This does not help them build attachments or feel emotionally secure.

Established staff are genuinely concerned with young people's welfare and have built trusting relationships with young people. However, the high turnover of placements has made this very difficult. Staff value young people's ideas and choices and these are reflected throughout the home. For example, young people have painted communal rooms with colour, flair and imagination. Staff support young people in making complaints. However, the feeling from young people is that there will be no action taken about some of the on-going issues raised. Staff do challenge young people and try to set boundaries. However, inconsistencies in their approach means young people feel that staff are unfair and change the rules. In addition following any measure of discipline, young people's views are not always sought.

Staff encourage young people to attend their educational placements and in one case this has been successful resulting in an end of term celebration of success. However, the majority of young people do not attend despite previous good attendance before coming to the home. This has resulted in a general culture of non attendance and means young people have poor routines and are getting increasingly behind.

There are a range of activities provided and feedback about activities from professionals is good. Young people, however, see disparity between what is on offer and monies allocated to individuals. Given the general unrest of the home young people are unclear about holiday plans despite being halfway through the summer holidays.

The home is located within easy reach of amenities of the local town and young people use the facilities on offer. There is ample space in communal living areas and parts of the home are warm and welcoming. There are, however, areas that are not maintained or cleaned to a high enough standard following repeated damage to the home. This does not encourage young people to value and respect their

surroundings.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The majority of young people spoken to during the inspection feel unsafe at the home. This is due to the volatile atmosphere and dynamics of the group. There are also staff who feel intimidated by the behaviour of young people. This is not conducive to a safe or orderly environment and does not promote security or stability for young people. While young people's safety is not in immediate danger there are young people who spend periods of time away from the home in preference to being at the home for the above reasons.

There are a high number of bullying incidents which staff try to manage. However, patterns and trends of behaviour are not reflected upon and preventative action is not taken. This is partly due to the dynamics within the group and also the inexperience of some relief staff. In addition there are high numbers of young people missing from the home for short periods. Staff try hard to ensure their safety by providing late collections and maintaining contact, however, these have escalated. This means that at times staff do not know the whereabouts of young people who are engaging in risk taking behaviours with peers in the community. This does not help keep young people safe.

Young people's behaviour is mixed there are some young people who are polite and considerate to staff and others who challenge staff with physical and verbal aggression. There is a behaviour management policy and guides to managing individuals within care plans and risk assessments. While these are clearly written they are not consistently implemented by staff. Expectations are low; there are no clear routines and a lack of boundaries. This has resulted in young people having control of the home. Disciplinary measures are used at times; however, the recording is inconsistent and does not fully meet requirements. Restraint is very rarely used although there have been three restraints recently. Two of these do not meet the criteria for restraint and breach regulatory requirements.

The environment is safe and generally secure. Health and safety checks and fire drills ensure that young people are physically safe. However, during the inspection the door to the home failed to close and this left it open for people to access without staffs' knowledge. This does not provide adequate security for young people.

Leadership and management

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

The home has a Registered Manager in post and due to a number of on-going challenges faced by the home extra management support has been provided. However, management of the home is weak. Concerns about the home have been

raised by a number of sources and reiterated by young people. These relate to the suitability of placements, group dynamics, and promotion of education and management of behaviour. There are many inconsistencies and a lack of direct guidance and leadership. Overall, these shortfalls have been identified and addressed by senior managers. Interim management arrangements are in place to implement change and drive improvement to the service.

The home provides short to medium term care, however, there have been nine admissions in six months. This does not reflect the aims and objectives as set out in the Statement of Purpose. This has challenged staff in meeting individual needs as the group changes continually. New admissions are taken despite the home being extremely unsettled. Young people are moved quickly from the home; this fails young people and leaves the staff team demoralised and exhausted.

There are a number of internal complaints raised some of which have been addressed. The home has not acted on several issues raised at the last inspection and in addition the overall quality of care has declined. External monitoring is carried out and provides a clear overview of the home. However, internal monitoring has not been reflective or rigorous. This means the manager has failed to gain a realistic overview of the service and the value the home has provided for individual placements. There has been an unbalanced focus on individuals without taking into consideration the effects on other young people living at the home. This has been detrimental to young people.

There is a core established staff team who are dedicated and experienced. There are a number of staff who are on sick leave and a number of new staff in post. This has resulted in the use of new staff and relief staff. At times staff do not know who is on shift and have not met new staff due to be on shift. During periods of extreme challenge, inexperienced staff are unable to contain young people by implementing safe consistent boundaries. This does not meet young people's need or provide continuity of care.

Some staff receive regular supervision. However, there are staff who have undergone only two supervisions in eight months. Given the challenges faced by staff this does not provide for regular support as expected by the organisation. The professional development of staff is met well. Staff receive an adequate range of training to equip them for their roles.

The records relating to young people are not always clear. Some reporting lacks detail and context and there are reports with a bias and unprofessional terminology. These make incidents difficult to track and are unhelpful to young people who may request access to them. These issues have not been picked up meaning that the monitoring of records internally is not thorough. In addition records are not always secure as young people have removed items from the office. This does not respect young people's privacy or confidentiality.

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.