

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 in this home make sound progress as a result of the care they receive. They are positive about the home, and their relationships with the staff team. Young people benefit from strong attachments with staff and care planning which promotes their individual choices.

Staff generally apply boundaries and consistent approaches to behaviour. There are some aspects of young people's daily routine that do not promote healthy or structured lifestyles. Staff are proactive in helping young people learn about safety and young people say that unsafe situations are managed well by staff.

The leadership and management of the home are established. The manager leads a cohesive staff team. There are monitoring systems in place; however, the overall quality of care has declined since the last inspection.

There were several areas identified for improvement during the inspection and these include, the system for consultation regarding the Regulation 34 reports, the overall maintenance and décor of the home. Identified weaknesses also include the organisation of staff shifts and mealtimes and several areas regarding young people's health including smoking, food choices and in one case timely access to health professionals. In addition young people have no keys to their rooms.

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 (Regulation 31(1) (e))	31/12/2012
34 (2001)	establish a system for review of quality of care that provides for consultation with children accommodated in the home, their parents and placing authorities. (Regulation 34 (3))	16/08/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure that children understand how to maintain a healthy lifestyle and to make informed choices about their own health this is in regard to food choices and smoking (NMS 6.2)
- ensure that children have prompt access to health professionals (NMS 6)
- ensure that the organisation of the staff group on individual shifts can meet the individual needs of all the children resident in the home with particular reference to the shift start times of the night staff (NMS.1)
- 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 the environment and culture promotes models and supports positive behaviour in regard to meal times and care of the environment. (NMS 3.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are settled at the home and generally positive about the care they receive. Relationships between young people and staff are good. They have formed strong attachments with key staff and speak favourably about staff members. Young people clearly enjoy activities and games with staff and view these as part of their routine. Some of these take place at the start of the night shift which contributes to late settling times. Consequently, some young people struggle to get up in the morning which impacts on their educational attendance. Some aspects of young

people's health are supported well. Young people are registered with health professionals and other young people are receiving healthcare to support their individual circumstances. This works well with staff making appointments, chasing follow up appointments and recording outcomes on care plans. However, not all young people have accessed health professionals in a timely manner despite health concerns. Young people smoke at the service and, at times, this is in the house. While some young people have accessed cessation support, smoking is accepted as part of the culture of the young people who do not understand the detrimental risks to their health.

Young people are offered regular activity choices but prefer to spend time with peers. This has resulted in occasional unsafe and anti-social behaviours. There are some trips which young people enjoy and willingly take part in, including climbing at a forest activity centre. Positive contributions to the home are expected and requested with small financial rewards for tasks undertaken in the house. Young people take part in this scheme which they value and help with washing cars, sweeping the courtyard and painting the fence. This helps young people develop practical skills and build self-esteem. Young people are also expected to undertake cleaning of rooms, personal laundry and make light meals. While this supports aspects of independent life skills the outcomes for young people vary. Some young people do not prepare healthy snacks or meals and eat sugary snacks instead. Rooms vary from general untidiness to an inadequate state of cleanliness and maintenance. This does not provide a healthy or homely environment for young people to live in.

Young people benefit from regular and supported contact with friends and family. They all have mobile phones which they value and a telephone is available to them outside school hours. Parents visit the house and report that they feel welcome and comfortable spending time at the home. Young people are supported to spend time with people who are important to them. Staff help to facilitate this where agreed and provide good emotional support for young people who are in relationships with peers outside the home.

Quality of care

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

Staff have good relationships with young people and demonstrate genuine care and commitment about their well-being. Staff are responsive and flexible in the general provision of individual behavioural strategies and management plans. They show an understanding about the background of young people demonstrating empathy and concern. However, there are some behavioural issues in regard to care of the environment, meal times and settling times that staff have tried to address without success. This means behaviour has deteriorated in some of these areas resulting in young people eating meals in their rooms and generally not adhering to the domestic ground rules of the home.

Staff seek young people's views at meetings in which young people take an active

part. They are consulted about food choices, trips out, activities and colour schemes for the home. Staff listen and value young people's contributions and subsequently young people are confident to articulate their views and contribute these willingly during the inspection.

Care plans are well written and current; they give a clear overview of all aspects of young people's lives and their unique characteristics and backgrounds. This guides staff to ensure that care is individualised. Staff work well with parents to share information. This promotes a consistent approach which supports young people's personal safety and well-being.

Staff support young people's attendance in school adequately, although some care routines are not conducive to helping young people get up in the morning. This is in regard to settling times, which generally young people do adhere to. However, given the age and expected routines of the young people in the home, this is a late hour. Staff acknowledge achievement and effort at school and provide incentives and rewards for young people who attend.

The home resembles a detached family house. There is a surrounding garden and patio area housing some outdoor activities. However, during the inspection the patio and entrance areas were littered with cigarette ends. The first floor of the home was unkempt, bathrooms and in particular bedrooms were poorly maintained. Keys to bedrooms had not been replaced resulting in every young person having to ask staff to open bedroom doors. In contrast the ground floor was clean and homely. Overall, parts of the home and garden are not maintained or cleaned to an acceptable level resulting in areas that are unkempt and unclean.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are safe in the home and report that they generally feel safe. While there are some instances of bullying staff address these quickly and proactively. For example, extra staffing and one to one time is provided to support individuals experiencing difficulty within the group dynamics. Young people say that there are always staff they can approach and staff take such incidences seriously. This helps young people feel protected and reassured.

The positive approach to behaviour management is non-punitive and valued by young people who say that staff are fair. Staff focus strongly on positive affirmation and encourage young people to behave responsibly and consider one another. While there have been incidents of young people taking risks and making themselves unsafe, staff respond with a proactive and dynamic approach. For example, following serious concerns about the behaviours of young people a professional from a young offenders institution came to the home and spoke about custodial sentences. The fire service has also been asked to attend the home and educate young people about the dangers of fire.

The measures to protect young people from harm and promote their welfare are good. Systems are clear and understood by staff who receive specific training. Senior staff understand the system of referral following an allegation and therefore in the event of this happening young people are safeguarded.

The environment is safe and safety checks are carried out on fire prevention equipment and domestic appliances. The house is secure and visitors are chaperoned while in the building. Young people are able to enjoy levels of freedom and responsibility according to their individual vulnerabilities. There are times when young people go missing from the home which staff work hard to minimise. Staff have good links with community police and this helps monitor young people's whereabouts.

Leadership and management

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

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The home has an established manager, overseen and supported by the registered person, who ensures that management support is provided in her absence. This ensures the home is managed effectively at all times and provides consistency for young people and clear guidance for staff. Managers meet regularly from the cluster of homes operated by the local authority. This provides support and opportunities to share practice in order to monitor and discuss the quality of care provided for young people.

There are a united and committed staff team led by the manager. Staff manage competing demands during busy shifts with several young people at the home during the day. Staff are positive about the management arrangements and support provided. They are well qualified and supervised regularly. This ensures staff have the knowledge and skills to support young people's individual needs and understand their complex backgrounds. Staff work set shift patterns; while numbers of staff are sufficient, the start of the night shift does not help young people settle at a reasonable time. Therefore the organisation of staff does not always meet the ages and needs of young people at the home.

The requirement raised at the interim inspection in relation to submission of the manager's monitoring reports in accordance with Regulation 34 has been partly addressed. The report has been sent in, however, it does not provide consultation with children, parents and placing authorities as required. There are systems of internal monitoring of the service and these are robust and demonstrate consultation with young people. This ensures their views are included and sought regularly by an independent visitor. Feedback from professionals during the inspection is positive. A social worker spoken to says communication with the home is good.

Senior staff have some understanding of the homes weaknesses particularly in regard to the décor and maintenance. There are development plans with a general

commitment to maintain the home and garden. These include plans to address the first floor décor during the period young people go on holiday.

Records provide clear detail of the events and care given to young people. They are current and kept up to date by staff. Staff ensure that notifications are made to the appropriate authorities in a timely manner. This safeguards young people's welfare.

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.