

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Seka Graovac
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is registered to provide residential care and support for up to five young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties. The home is owned and operated by a private organisation and was registered in 2005.

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**.

Children and young people have developed sound relationship with staff. They are cared for by committed, qualified, well trained and well supported staff members. Many aspects of care provided are of good quality and make a strong contribution to improved outcomes for children and young people.

Children and young people's ability to reflect on their behaviour has significantly improved, but their educational engagement and progress are variable. Management is proactive in working closely with other professionals to address barriers to children and young people's engagement and progress.

Leaders and managers have good understanding of the strengths in the service provision. The weaknesses that they identified have led to the appropriate actions being taken to address them. However, the home's monitoring and in particular, the process for the review of the quality of care requires improvement.

Despite a high number of breaches of regulations and some failures to fully meet the relevant national minimum standards, the home has continued to provide a safe place for children and young people. Their welfare has not been negatively affected by the shortfalls in the service provision.

The home's Statement of Purpose and policies and procedures concerning safeguarding children and staff disciplinary process require minor amendments. The other areas for improvement include records relating to sanctions, complaints and visitors to the home. Ofsted must be informed of all significant incidents. Work to

improve the environment is already in progress.

Recommendations have been made in respect of demonstrating better how children and young people are being listened to; improving the quality of the individual risk assessments and recording the risk assessment for the environment.

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
4 (2001)	amend the home's Statement of Purpose so that it clearly reflects the service provided and explains the procedure for dealing when a child goes missing (Regulation 4(1) Schedule 1.18 and 1.26)	07/12/2013
16 (2001)	review and amend the home's written policies and procedures intended to safeguard children so that they clearly describe good practice (Regulation 16(1))	14/10/2013
17B (2001)	improve records of any measures of control or discipline so that they clearly cover all points required by legislation (Regulation 17B(3)(f)(h)(i))	07/11/2013
24 (2001)	ensure that a written record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response and the outcome of the investigation (Regulation 24(5))	07/11/2013
27 (2001)	amend the disciplinary policy so that it clearly specifies that the failure to report a safeguarding concern is a ground on which disciplinary proceedings may be instituted (Regulation 27(2)(b))	21/11/2013
29 (2001)	maintain a record of all visitors to the home including the names of visitors and the reasons for the visit (Regulation 29(1) Schedule 4.13)	08/10/2013
30 (2001)	notify Ofsted of any of the events listed in Schedule 5 including any serious incidents (Regulation 30(1) Schedule 5)	08/10/2013
31 (2001)	ensure that the premises are kept clean and reasonably decorated and maintained (Regulation 31(1)(e))	07/12/2013
34 (2001)	carry out a review of the quality of care as described in the regulation and ensure that Ofsted receives a copy of the report. (Regulation 34(1)(2)(3))	21/12/2013

Recommendations

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

- demonstrate better how children and young people are being listened to (Children Act 1989, Volume 5 point 2.28)
- demonstrate better how children are helped to understand how to keep themselves safe including outside the home by improving the quality of the written individual risk assessments (NMS 4.4)
- record a risk assessment of the whole children's home environment. (NMS 10.8)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **adequate**.

The majority of young people who live in this home do not want to be in care and remain reluctant to engage. They have made a limited progress in understanding their background and the reasons for being in care.

However, they are increasingly more able to constructively express their views. Some young people who needed more help, have benefited from independent advice and support given to them by children's rights advocates and solicitors.

The majority of young people with a history of offending have kept to their bail conditions. The young people who have been suspected of drug-related offences have shown no signs of any involvement with illegal drugs while at the home.

The most significant progress that the young people have made relates to their increased ability to reflect on their behaviour. They are now more willing to talk realistically and maturely about it. They understand better the consequences of the challenging behaviour. They are more able to take responsibility for their behaviour. They are more willing to apologise when their behaviour falls below the standard they agreed to achieve. They usually present as very polite and well-behaved young people.

Children and young people enjoy generally good health. They have learnt about the importance of having healthy lifestyles. They are committed to exercising and achieving and maintaining a healthy body weight. Improved health of the young people who were previously on a regular prescribed medication has resulted in a reduction of medication.

Children and young people have improved their self-view, personal hygiene and social presentation. They frequently spend time with their families and friends and enjoy maintaining and developing positive relationships with them.

Having come to the home with a strong history of either very fractured education or complete non-engagement, they have made some progress in this area. However,

this progress is slow and not consistent. Some young people attended short summer courses on various topics and achieved certificates, such as in filmmaking and community awareness.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy having developed sound relationships with staff. They describe the staff as 'ok' and the quality of support they receive as 'fine'.

A youth offending officer has commented positively about the staff's good understanding of the needs and behaviour of the individual young people in their care. Staff are willing and competent to flexibly tailor the support provided around young people.

In line with the placement and care plans, children and young people have easy access to the general and specialist services and support they require to have their health, social and educational needs met. Their personal identity, cultural background and any equality and diversity issues are clearly described in the home's own care plans and effectively addressed in daily living. They receive personalised care and support to develop their individuality and independence.

Professionals external to the home have commented positively about the management's proactive approach to appropriate information sharing and good joint working. Social workers receive regular monitoring updates on the progress the young people have made and are informed without delay of any incidents they have been involved in.

The arrangements for dealing with young people's medication are safe and include robust record keeping.

Through actively supporting and encouraging young people to go to school or college and to attend their other appointments, staff facilitate young people's positive engagement. They consistently promote young people's participation in the community, in the local leisure activities and in learning.

Staff work together with other professionals, but also with young people themselves to identify any barriers to their progress and search for the solutions for removing these barriers. Young people have opportunities to contribute to their care and the life of the home through their statutory reviews, monthly residents' meetings and regular key-working sessions.

However, the format for keeping records of the key-working sessions gives more importance to the views of the key-workers, as only a small section of it has been devoted to the views of the children and young people. The records of residents meetings show that they have been mainly used to reinforce the rules and

boundaries.

An appropriate complaints procedure is in place, but has not been used. Young people report not having any concerns about the home or suggestions about what could be improved.

The provider has identified improving the home's environment as a priority. Some individual bedrooms and common areas have been fully refurbished. A significant programme of much needed repairs in other parts of the building is in progress. However, this has not been always managed well. For example, the workmen have removed the flooring cover in the kitchen and the bathrooms five days earlier, but then stopped working. The toilet seat in the only other bathroom/ toilet in the home remains broken. Some parts of the home do not provide a suitable physical environment for children and young people.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children and young people report that they feel safe in the home. They say that they get on well with each other and do not experience any bullying or intimidation in the home. They feel generally safe outside the home, too. They also report being able to share safety concerns with staff, if they had any.

When a young person did not feel safe in the community, the home worked in close partnership with other professionals to ensure their protection. The management participated in the multi-professional risk management meetings. The main aims of these meetings were to identify, agree and implement strategies to protect and promote this young person's welfare and enable them to develop safer behaviour, resilience and confidence. However, the home is unable to demonstrate how this joint working translated into the home's own written individual risk assessment and management plan for this young person. This document has not been individualised enough. It is vague and contains quite general statements based on what usually helps to promote almost any young person's welfare.

The home has a number of written policies and procedures that provide comprehensive guidance to staff on how to best safeguard and protect young people. However, the small section on young people abusing each other contains a confusing statement that is not clearly in line with what is acceptable safeguarding practice. The management and staff were in full agreement that the home's written information does not clearly reflect their ways of thinking or practice. They state that any safeguarding concerns including those relating to the possibly abusive relationship between young people would be taken seriously and would be referred without delay to the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

Regular staff training and focus on safeguarding children and managing their behaviour at the team meetings contributes to the high consistency of staff practice. The quality of records relating to safeguarding, such as individual risk assessments

and recently introduced individual behaviour management plans as separate documents, is adequate.

Staff consistently reinforce firm boundaries with young people and there is a clear reward system in place to promote young people's positive behaviours. There have been no incidents in the home when staff intervened physically. The individual young people's management plans make a reference to restraints being used as the last resort and only if the attempt is likely to bring more safety to people involved. On some occasions, when young people behaved in a highly challenging manner, staff resorted to calling the police.

Staff use sanctions and report that at times, they have proved to be effective. An example of this is a reduction of the duration of the young person's missing from the home. However, the log of sanctions shows repetitious records, lack of consistently asking young people for their views, lack of the meaningful evaluation of the effectiveness of these control measures used and lack of robust management oversight.

The environment is physically safe and appropriately secure. Good fire safety arrangements are in place and include raising awareness amongst young people through their induction to the home and on on-going basis. Health and safety checks are regularly undertaken to minimise health and safety risks. However, the management is unable to demonstrate that a full risk assessment of the premises has been carried out.

The home's staff recruitment procedure includes evidencing all required checks. All staff have been appropriately vetted and are suitable to work with children and young people.

Lone working risk assessments have been carried out and recorded. This ensures that on occasions when a staff member works alone, this working arrangement is safe and that control measures are in place to minimise the risks identified.

Leadership and management

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

There is a Statement of Purpose (SOP) that systematically follows Schedule 1 layout. However, although the SOP covers the home's procedure for dealing with children and young people who are absent without authority, it does not provide information on the procedure for protecting them when they are missing from the home. This information is provided in a separate written document, but it has not been referred to in the SOP.

The SOP does not clearly specify that the home does not use any therapeutic techniques. On one occasion, a local authority made a placement in the wrong belief that the home provided a therapeutic care environment.

The rest of the information provided in the SOP is clear and accurate. The home clearly states that it provides emergency placements and the majority of the recent placements have been made on this basis.

On admission to the home, children and young people receive comprehensive information and an in-depth induction to what they can expect from the service and what is expected from them.

The management works positively with the social workers and other professionals to ensure the effectiveness of care planning and that the placement arrangements are regularly reviewed. The manager is willing to appropriately challenge social workers in the best interest of children and young people. For example, if the social worker does not turn up for a scheduled appointment with the young person or when the information about possible future arrangements is prematurely shared with the young person.

The Registered Manager is a qualified social worker. Through her practice, she models commitment to providing high quality support and making a difference in the lives of children and young people. She is supported by experienced staff, all of whom are appropriately qualified. The stable staff team has recently been strengthened by a newly created post of a deputy manager that has been recruited into, to extend the management resources available.

Staff report being well supported in their roles. They receive regular formal supervision and annual individual appraisal of their performance. Their individual training needs are identified and there is a training plan in place that contributes to their ability to meet the needs of children and young people in their care. When the home considered admitting a young person who possibly suffered had a mild autistic spectrum disorder, the staff received specific training relating to this. Children and young people are cared for by committed, qualified, well trained and well supported staff members. Staff duty rosters are appropriately kept. Staffing levels are kept under review and adjusted in line with the young people's needs.

Staff report seeing genuine respect for others and the promotion and celebration of equalities and diversities within the team and in the relationships with children and young people as the main strengths of the service.

In addition to the manager's close involvement in the day-to-day delivery of care and support to children and young people, other quality assurance activities that specifically focus on monitoring, also take place. This includes internal monitoring, as well as monthly visits by an external consultant. Ofsted receives regular monthly monitoring reports, but no six-monthly report on the review of the quality of care has been received.

The management have a certain level of understanding of the home's weaknesses and have development plans in place to improve the service. For example, a clear maintenance plan is being implemented to address various issues with the décor and the environment. However, some staff practice, such as recording wrong information

under the effectiveness of the sanctions or vagueness of some records on children's files have gone unchallenged. In addition, not recording informal complaints compromises monitoring and limits the learning opportunities for the service. The home's visitors book contains information on which organisation the visitor represents, but the actual names of the visitors have not been always recorded.

Ofsted has received several notifications from the home following significant events. However, when a young person sustained some facial injuries while being involved in a fight with five young people in a youth club, Ofsted was not notified of this. The manager reasoned that the injuries were only superficial and the young person refused to involve police or emergency health services. The information was shared with the young person's social worker. The incident has had a significant impact on the young person's confidence, as they did not feel safe any longer in the locality. This incident became the determining factor in them being moved out of the area. Not notifying significant incidents to Ofsted compromises our role in monitoring of these incidents.

No requirements or recommendations were raised at the last inspection. However, in September 2013, Ofsted made the provider and the manager aware of the shortfalls in some of the organisation's written policies and procedures that have come to light as part of the registration of a new service assessment process. Those shortfalls have not been addressed as yet. In addition to the unfortunate wording in the safeguarding policy that has already been commented on, the written disciplinary policy does not make clear that disciplinary proceedings will be instituted for not reporting safeguarding concerns. However, this information is included in some other policies and procedures. There has been no observable negative impact of these shortfalls on the actual staff practice and children and young people.

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.