

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Michelle Bacon
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home provides care and accommodation for up to five children or young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties. The home is owned by a private organisation.

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 **good**.

This home provides good quality care so young people are able to develop and grow. Overall, young people are making good progress behaviourally, socially and educationally, despite their difficult past experiences. Young people say they like living in the home.

A stable staff team demonstrate a commitment to improving outcomes for young people. Social workers involved with the home comment that communication is effective and that the home works well with them to meet the needs of the young people.

Since the last inspection, the numbers of young people reported missing from the home has fluctuated. Nevertheless, there is evidence that the frequency with which some young people go missing has reduced over time. Despite this, a recent episode when a young person went missing demonstrates some weaknesses in the home's procedures. Although the manager has identified this shortfall, a requirement is made to ensure young people's welfare and safety is fully protected.

Care plans are individualised and tailored to meet young people's specific needs. Young people are encouraged take an active role in decision making in individual key work sessions as well as within the group. This ensures young people feel valued and enables them to develop positive relationships as a group.

Shortfalls have been identified in regard to sanctions, personal education plans,

missing from home records, staff training and the décor of the home. Requirements and recommendations have been made in relation to these shortfalls.

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 a clear procedure to be followed when any child accommodated in the home is absent without permission which has regard to any relevant local authority or police protocols on missing children (Regulation 16(4)(b))	23/12/2013
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control or discipline, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose of which meets the Regulation. (Regulation 17B(3)(a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f)(h)(i))	23/12/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure where any sanctions, disciplinary measures or restraint are used, children are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records kept by the home (NMS 3.18)
- ensure written records kept by the home when a young person goes missing detail action taken by staff, in particular any reasons given by the young person for running away and any action taken in the light of those reasons (NMS 5.10)
- ensure staff have up-to-date information about each child's educational progress, including a copy of their personal education plans (NMS 8.7)
- ensure the home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well maintained and decorated, in particular that worn carpets are replaced (10.3)
- ensure staff are equipped with the skills and knowledge required to meet the needs of young people, in particular those young people at risk of exploitation and missing from the home. (NMS 18.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Most young people experience positive outcomes in all aspects of their lives, including their emotional well-being. Young people often present with very complex needs as a result of their early life experiences. With the support of specialist therapeutic services and regular discussions in one-to-one sessions with staff, young people are helped to gain an understanding of their background and build their emotional resilience.

Young people are generally fit and healthy. They have access to a range of health care professionals to ensure all of their health needs are met. They live in a healthy environment, where they have access a range of information to address issues such as sexual health, smoking, alcohol or substance misuse. Furthermore, young people are encouraged to participate in smoking cessation programmes, though their success with this varies, as some young people continue to put their health at risk by continuing to smoke.

The risk-taking behaviour of some young people has reduced from their starting point of placement; with the support of specialist services and staff they are learning how to make better life choices.

All young people are engaged in education and overall their attendance is very good. Some young people have made excellent progress in completing a number of national qualifications. One young person is very proud of their achievements and has aspirations for their future. In addition, young people are encouraged to develop their hobbies and interests. For example, some young people really enjoy playing pool while another young person has a keen interest in photography.

Young people benefit from appropriate contact with family and friends. Some young people are able to stay over at their friends which they enjoy. However, the arrangements for these overnight stays are not clearly outlined in young people's placement plans to prevent any ambiguity.

All young people are provided with plenty of opportunities to develop their independence skills through helping with cooking and cleaning. However, there is reluctance on the part of those young people soon to leave to engage in any formal independence training. However, staff are proactive in trying to prepare these young people for the transition to independent living.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy positive relationships with staff in a nurturing and caring environment. Young people are encouraged to participate in their statutory reviews and to contribute to decisions about their futures. Regular house meetings provide a forum for group discussion and enable young people to have a say in the running of the home. This means young people feel listened to and that their views are taken seriously.

Young people are aware of how to make a complaint. They are provided with clear information on how to complain. Some young people have used the complaint procedure to effectively raise concerns. All their complaints are taken seriously and responded to appropriately. In addition, young people are provided with contact numbers for independent advocacy services outside of the home should they have a complaint about their care.

Comprehensive placement plans clearly identify individual young people's needs and how these are to be addressed in daily living. Staff have a good understanding of the young people they work with; they work proactively and positively with other agencies to ensure improved outcomes for young people. This includes working with placing authorities, education providers, health professionals and the police to promote young people's welfare.

Staff work closely with education providers to ensure young people's attendance and participation is maintained. This has resulted in improved attendance for those young people who previously had poor attendance prior to their move to this home. In addition young people have access to books and board games that promote their development in the home. However, some young people's file do not contain an up-to-date personal education plan, which means staff do not have details of individual young people's learning objectives and targets.

The home is located in a residential area and in easy reach of all local facilities. All young people have their own bedrooms and are encouraged to take responsibility for keeping them clean and tidy. Overall the home is decorated and furnished to a very good standard. However, the first floor is not in keeping with the rest of the home as some of the carpets are worn and make-up had been wiped on one of the walls.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

There are adequate arrangements in place to safeguard young people. Staff undertake safeguarding training to promote and protect the welfare of young people. Young people do not identify bullying as an issue in the home and say they feel safe.

Individual risk assessments are in place for all young people so that staff are aware of individual risks and the appropriate action in order to minimise such concerns. However, some risk assessments lack specific details, which could impact on the support provided to the young people.

Often, young people have a history of going missing from care when they move to this home. Although they demonstrate a reduction in this behaviour, it is evident fluctuations do occur. Clear protocols are in place to report young people who go missing. However, on one occasion staff did not realise a young person was missing, which meant there was a delay in the procedures being implemented. Remedial action was being taken in respect of this shortfall during the inspection. Where

concerns arise about a young person's welfare staff engage in multi-agency strategy meetings to protect young people. The missing from home records do not capture the reasons behind young people choosing to go missing. This means the manager is not able to fully assess the reasons behind this behaviour.

All staff are trained in behaviour management, including the use of restraint. Records show there have been no restraints since the last inspection. Positive behaviour management strategies are used to influence good behaviour. In addition, 'consequences' are used where misbehaviour occurs. However, the recording of these does not meet the relevant regulation as they are not recorded in a volume kept for this purpose and the current records do not include all the information required in the regulation. Furthermore, young people are not consistently encouraged to have their views recorded in the home's records. This means that the manager is unable to review the effectiveness of a consequence and a young person's understanding of the measure imposed.

Young people are protected by robust recruitment and vetting procedures. Furthermore, good health and safety routines are in place. This helps to ensure the welfare and safety of young people is protected.

Leadership and management

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

Overall, the home is a well-managed. No requirements or recommendations were made at the last inspection. The home meets the aims and objectives of the Statement of Purpose. It provides clear information to staff, placing social workers and young people and their parents about the facilities. In addition, young people are given a copy of a children's guide which includes details about the home and how to access external services should they wish.

Staff numbers are such that they sufficiently meet the current needs of the young people placed. Staff have completed all mandatory training and a training plan is in place for the forthcoming year. However, staff would benefit from some additional training on young people at risk from exploitation and missing from the home to ensure they have the appropriate skills and knowledge to meet the needs of these vulnerable young people.

All staff have either attained, or are currently undertaking a level 3 qualification. Supervision, appraisals and regular team meetings also support staff to provide a good quality service to the young people.

There are systems in place to monitor the home. Any areas for improvement are fed into the home's development plan to ensure outcomes for young people and the quality of care continue to improve.

Young people's files are stored securely. They provide a comprehensive picture of a young person's needs and progress and contribute to an understanding of a 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* and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes.