

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Jo Stephenson
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home provides an intake and assessment service. It provides short-term care and accommodation for up to three young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home is privately owned and operates on behalf of a 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 home provides a supportive environment in which young people are generally happy. Young people say they enjoy positive relationships with staff and each other. Staff are able to recognise and evaluate individual care and welfare needs and these are recorded within internal assessment documents. However, assessment documents are not supported by up-to-date statutory placement plans or care plans. As a result, positive outcomes for young people are not continually promoted. Furthermore, case files do not adhere to schedule 3 and this means staff do not have access to all necessary information relating to the support needs of young people.

Staff seek the views and wishes of young people through placement plan sessions and regular young people's meetings. Young people say they feel involved in the daily running of the home and are consulted on plans for their future. Young people benefit from the consistent application of clear boundaries and staff encourage the development of positive behaviours through personalised reward programmes. Nevertheless, reward charts are unclear and do not reflect the most significant actions of young people and therefore have little impact on these behaviours.

The manager retains an overview of the progress of the service, and is able to recognise the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. Monitoring systems are clear and identify patterns and trends and shape the development of the home. However, the home does not work in effective partnership with the placing authority and this has a negative impact on the welfare of young people and the progress they make. For example, some young people have disengaged from education since

coming to the home. There has been a significant increase in missing from home events for young people and these concerns are not clearly addressed or tackled with the placing authority and this places young people at risk of harm.

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)	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))	30/09/2013
11 (2001)	ensure that the children's home is conducted so as to promote and make proper provisions for the welfare of children accommodated there (Regulation 11(1)(a))	30/09/2013
12A (2001)	ensure co-operation with the child's placing authority in agreeing and signing the plan for the child's placement prepared in accordance with the provisions in regulation 9 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 (Regulation 12A(1))	30/09/2013
18 (2001)	promote the educational achievements of children accommodated in the home, in particular be ensuring that the children make use of educational facilities appropriate to their age, aptitude, needs, interests and potential (Regulation 18(1)(a))	16/10/2013
28 (2001)	maintain in respect to each child accommodated in a children's home a record in permanent form which includes the information, documents and records specified in Schedule 3 relating to that child. (Regulation 28(1)(a))	30/09/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure sanctions and rewards for behaviour are clear, reasonable and fair and are understood by all staff and children (NMS 3.8)
- ensure the home considers with the responsible authority what action should be taken to prevent a child going missing. Any concerns arising from the placement are addressed, as far as possible, in conjunction with the responsible authority (NMS 5.9)

- ensure physical restrictions on normal movement from the home are not used unless this is necessary to safeguard children and promote their welfare and development. Such restrictions for one child do not impose similar restrictions on other children. (NMS 10.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **adequate**.

Young people make good progress in developing a positive self-view and building self-confidence and self-esteem. Staff support young people to understand and acknowledge their backgrounds and consider the impact this has on their future. One young person said, 'I wasn't easy to live with and now I know why, I know not everything is someone else's fault.' One-to-one sessions are used to encourage young people to reflect on their behaviour and consider the impact this has on others.

Young people's general health needs are met and they access primary healthcare services, such as regular doctors, dentists and optician appointment. Staff have established working relationships with specialist health services, such as CAMHS, for young people who require additional support. As a result, young people benefit from a bespoke health care service that recognises their needs and promotes their development.

Staff endeavour to promote the importance of education in the home. For example, one young person said, 'I like school and I know the staff are proud of me for going.' However, since coming to the home, some young people have disengaged from education and their attendance is extremely poor. Staff have introduced reward programmes around school attendance and achievements but these are not reviewed for effectiveness or amended to motivate young people to attend their provisions. The home liaises with education providers and the placing authority to attempt to resolve barriers to learning, although alternative education provisions do not reflect the needs or abilities of young people. As a result, some young people do not feel supported or stimulated to continue their education. One young person said, 'I don't go to school anymore but it doesn't really matter. I'll just go to college when I'm older.' Furthermore, not all young people have statutory personal education plans that identify their progress or consider the impact of any special educational needs, emotional or behavioural issues.

Young people say they enjoy attending monthly young people's meetings. They say their views are sought on menu choices, activity plans and the development of the home. Young people say they are consulted on the daily running of the home and have suggested changes that have improved the internal decoration. Staff identify community based and sporting activities for young people. This means that young people have the opportunity to learn a range of new skills and decide on interests they would like to pursue.

Managers and staff encourage young people to sustain and progress relationships

with their families. Staff maintain contact with families on a weekly basis to enhance working relationships and provide a unified and realistic care plan for young people, when practicable. Young people are encouraged to socialise with their friends outside of the home and staff support this by provided activities for friends and families to participate in. Subsequently, young people are not isolated from their peer group.

Staff ensure that personalised independent skills programmes are in place for eligible young people, to help prepare them for their transition to adulthood. Programmes reflect the abilities of young people, and assessment records monitor their progress. However, these plans are not consistently supported by statutory pathway plans to identify potential future accommodation options for young people. This means that young people do not always benefit from a clear understanding of the practicalities of independent living.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy good relationships with staff. Staff have a detailed knowledge of the individual needs of young people and are able to ascertain antecedents to changes in mood. Staff complete internal assessment documents for young people over an eight week period following admission. These consider the individual welfare needs of young people and suggest future accommodation options that can support young people to develop in all aspects of their life. However, statutory placement plans and care plans are not up to date and do not reflect these assessments. Young people remain in the home for significantly longer than the assessment period agreed with the placing authority. Subsequently, young people do not experience an integrated or comprehensive approach to their care. As a result, young people say they feel their 'lives are on hold' and therefore their welfare and well-being are not promoted.

Young people have individualised risk assessments and behaviour management strategies in place that recognised their skills and vulnerabilities and encourage them to reflect on their behaviour. Staff engage young people in regular placement plan sessions to consider the progress they are making and ascertain their views and wishes on all aspects of their care. Nonetheless, this information is not effectively included within the statutory review process.

The home provides the placing authority with appropriate and regular feedback on young people's progress and development. However, this information is not utilised to influence the contents of statutory placement plans. As a result, statutory plans do not reflect the current vulnerabilities of young people or promote their welfare. Managers and staff do not effectively liaise with the placing authority to ensure that placements remain appropriate to meet the needs of young people.

Young people participate in regular young people's meetings and are consulted on a range of topics. Staff share information with young people about proposed changes to the daily running of the home and the impact this may have on practice.

Consequently, young people feel they influence the development of the home. The home operates a robust complaints procedure and young people confirm they understand how to raise a concern. Young people say they are able to make a complaint and feel confident that this will be appropriately resolved. Complaints monitoring records are detailed and show that issues raised are addressed within suitable timescales.

The home has developed partnerships arrangements with general and specialist health services. Staff promote the emotional, psychological and physical health needs of young people and encourage them to maintain a healthy life style. Interventions provided by external agencies, such as counselling services are further supported by staff through one-to-one sessions with young people. This means that young people benefit from an integrated approach to meeting their health needs. Nevertheless, case files do not include all up-to-date health documents for young people, such as immunisation records and annual medical checks.

Staff encourage young people to pursue a range of activities and interests. These are incorporated into individual activity plans, and for some young people, further support their school timetables and provide continued learning opportunities. Young people participate in activities that reflect their personal interests. Staff support young people to vary their activities to develop new skills. This means that young people are provided with opportunities to improve their self-confidence and social interactions

The home is maintained to a good standard and is located close to essential amenities such as transport links, shopping centres and sporting facilities. Young people say they are involved in the decoration and furnishing of the home and are encouraged to personalise their bedrooms.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say they feel safe and that issues of bullying are rare in the home. Staff are alert to the signs of bullying and intimidation and discuss these with young people during regular meetings and one-to-one sessions. The anti-bullying procedure is reflected in individual behaviour plans in place to keep young people safe.

Policies and procedures support and promote safe work practices. Staff have a good understanding of safeguarding procedures and receive regular training to support and refresh their knowledge. Allegations and suspicions of harm are effectively managed through liaison with local safeguarding teams.

The home works in close partnership with local police to address incidents of young people missing from home. Young people have detailed risk assessments in place that include the potential risk for sexual exploitation and highlight antecedents to missing from home episodes. Risk assessment include actions to be taken by staff should young people go missing. However, incidents of young people missing from

home have significantly increased and this means that the welfare of young people is not promoted. Managers and staff say they discuss missing from home events with the placing authority but actions to be taken to keep young people safe are unclear as meetings are not recorded. This means that young people continue to reside in a placement that cannot address this specific risk taking behaviour. Furthermore, the customary use of a front door alarm to notify staff when young people are leaving the building is inappropriate and restricts the liberty of other young people living in the home.

Staff receive regular training in physical intervention and de-escalation techniques, although the use of physical restraint is rare. Records of restraint are detailed and include 'debrief' sessions with young people that encourage them to discuss their feelings and views about physical restraint. Staff implement behaviour reward charts that encourage young people to display socially acceptable behaviour and work toward attaining their goals. Nevertheless, reward charts are not clear, regularly reviewed or reflective of the most significant behaviours displayed by young people. This means that young people are not motivated to make positive changes to their behaviours.

Staff complete general risk assessments to ensure that young people are kept safe from known hazards within the home and whilst on activities. Young people take part in regular fire drills; checks and tests of fire safety equipment are also carried out.

The manager adheres to organisational recruitment procedures. Staff employed in the home are carefully selected and vetted to ensure their suitability to work with young people.

Leadership and management

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

The home has a permanent manager who is registered with Ofsted. The manager leads a motivated staff team who are able to assess and understand the needs of young people. Staff state they appreciate the 'continued commitment' of the manager. Staff attend regular team meetings and say these are supportive and productive to the development of the home. The manager ensures that staff receive regular formal supervision that considers staff learning and development needs as well as scrutinising their practice and performance.

Young people are provided with a copy of the children's guide to the home on admission. This is detailed, well presented and appropriate to their understanding. The Statement of Purpose details the aims and objectives of the home and gives clear guidance on the facilities and services provided. However, the home does not consistently follow the aims and objectives specified in this guide. For example, following an eight week assessment period, meetings between the home and the placing authority are not arranged to discuss the future placement needs of young people. As a result, young people remain in the home longer than anticipated and are unclear as to when they will move to a more suitable long term placement.

Subsequently the positive impact and value the home has on the lives of young people is reduced because partnerships agreements between the placing authority and the home are not followed.

Monitoring tools are in place to consider the quality of care for young people and the manager is able to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the home. The manager seeks regular feedback from young people, staff, parents, partner agencies and the placing authority on the progress of the home. Nevertheless, identified shortfalls are not effectively actioned. For example, case files do not include all information as required. Missing documentation and records are not effectively pursued with appropriate managers within the placing authority. This means that the quality of care and outcomes for young people is not continually promoted.

The Registered Manager operates a system to record incidents and significant events and describes action taken, including the notification of these events to the appropriate authorities. Systems are robust and identify patterns and trends to young people's behaviours that are cross referenced to internal assessment documents. As a result, young people have the opportunity to review their behaviour and the progress they have made at the home.

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.