

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Angela Whiteley
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This private home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to two young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties and/or learning difficulties. The home is also registered to provide education.

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**.

Young people receive a good standard of care and say this is a good home to live in. Some young people benefit from personalised and well-planned care with detailed risk assessments tailored to meet their individual needs. However, not all young people have up-to-date plans from the placing authority that they have contributed to and fully understand, as they are not available in the home. Staff are proactive in chasing missing documents and requesting review meetings where a change in the care plan is needed. This ensures young people are cared for in line with their individual placement plans and have opportunity to contribute to their reviews.

Some young people make good progress in all aspects of their lives. They respond well to incentives and rewards in individual behaviour management plans. However, some behaviour management plans lack specific detail, in particular relating to the use of restraint. There are shortfalls in the recording of restraints.

Young people benefit from the positive relationships they develop with staff. The staff provide opportunities for young people to succeed and encourage them to make positive choices in preparation for their adult lives. Young people are consulted about all aspects of their care. Their views and wishes carry weight, ensuring their needs are central to the running of the home. As a result, changes are made for their benefit.

Staff encourage young people to access education, community activities and to maintain regular contact with family and friends. A particular strength of this home is the promotion of young people's friendships with peers to build self-esteem and self-confidence outside the home. Staff also support them to access health services. However, not all young people are willing to access this support to promote their

health and well-being.

The progress of some young people at this home is compromised by their wish to make their own decisions about key areas of their lives, which places them at risk of harm. For example, some young people will not attend routine medical appointments and are not adhering to contact restrictions agreed by the placing authority. However, staff are fully aware of and implement the safeguarding measures, which help to keep young people safe, for instance when they go missing from the home. The registered person does not, however consistently notify outcomes of child protection investigations to Ofsted, particularly when young people are moved to other placements. However, staff take appropriate action to ensure the safety and welfare of young people. Bedrooms and bathrooms are not routinely kept clean so the environment is not as homely and pleasant as required. The breaches in regulation mainly relate to administrative procedures and systems and have a minimal impact on the 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
28 (2001)	ensure young people's files contain all the information and documents specified in Schedule 3; with particular reference to a copy of the placing authority plan for the care of the child, or placement plan (Regulation 28 (1) (a) & Schedule 3(18))	02/07/2012
30 (2001)	notify without delay any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 5; with reference to notifying Ofsted of the instigation and outcome of any child protection enquiry involving a child accommodated at the home (Regulation 30 (1))	02/07/2012
17B (2001)	ensure that physical restraint records include all the required information, which is recorded within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline. In particular, ensure restraint is not used to force compliance with instructions. (Regulation 17B (3) (4))	02/07/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure restraint is not used to force compliance with instructions where

significant or serious damage to property are not otherwise likely (NMS 3.14 and Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph 2.100)

- ensure children's health is promoted in accordance with their placement plan and staff are clear about what responsibilities and decisions are delegated to them. In particular, this relates to young people smoking (NMS 6.5 and Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph 2.58)
- ensure the home provides a comfortable and homely environment; in particular improve the routine cleaning of young people's bedrooms and bathroom (NMS 10.3)
- ensure children understand, within their level of understanding, the purpose and content of their plan and the reasoning behind any decisions about their care. (NMS 25.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people enjoy a healthy balanced diet, which includes a diverse range of foods that meets their cultural requirements. Most young people enjoy good health. They attend appointments with specialist health professionals which enable individual health needs to be met. However, some young people who have been in placement only a short time are choosing not to engage with services. Staff recognise the importance of continuing to support young people. They offer sufficient health information about the effects of smoking, alcohol and drug use but some young people choose not to take the advice given, which puts their health at risk.

Staff help young people to understand and address the impact their life experiences have on the behaviour they exhibit and help them bring about positive changes. Some young people are extremely settled and have made good progress from the start of their placement, which is closely linked to positive behaviour change. However, others have only recently been admitted to the home and continue to display the same behaviours that were presenting prior to their admission. At this early stage not all young people are willing to accept that their behaviours need to change or that their risk taking behaviours place them at significant risk of harm, particularly when they continue to go missing from the home. Staff take appropriate action in response to any incidents and are committed to helping young people achieve stability.

Staff promote and support young people with their education. However, not all young people maintain regular attendance due to their recent placement history and lack of stability, which means some are struggling to achieve their potential. Staff are attempting to address this through their in-house education provision. Teachers come to the home and have commented on the positive attitude of students once they are engaged in study. Other young people have made good progress and have been re-introduced into mainstream school. They have successfully completed Key Stage 2 examinations achieving in line with their peers before transferring to

secondary school.

Most young people engage in a range of social and sporting activities such as girls' brigade, cinema, bowling and the arcade. This promotes positive self-esteem and widens their social networks. Some young people who have been in placement only a short while, require close supervision from staff until they have settled. This is agreed with the placing authority and safeguards and promotes the welfare of young people while risk assessments are undertaken. Young people say this de-motivates them and they choose not to participate in community activities at this time.

Young people have a strong sense of identity, reinforced by regular contact with their families in line with agreed arrangements. However, some young people have not accepted the placing authority's restrictions on their family contact and have chosen to make their own contact arrangements without informing any staff, which has placed them at risk of harm. Staff respond quickly to these situations implementing sound safeguarding measures to protect young people and safeguard their welfare.

Quality of care

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

Young people say they receive good quality care and that they get on 'ok' with the staff. A parent has said that, 'staff are great'. Young people's views and feelings are central to the planning and day-to-day running of the home. They have individualised care packages, which are reviewed regularly. However, not all young people's plans are up to date or present on the file, as placing authorities have not had opportunity to consult with some young people as they have only recently been admitted and have been missing for most of that time. Some assessments of young people admitted in an emergency are still underway, hampered by the fact that they are absent. Staff are in regular contact with the placing authorities to chase up missing documents and to request review meetings if a change in the care plan is needed. Young people are aware of the complaints process and are able to revisit this every month with the staff member who has specific responsibility for this area. This ensures they are able to obtain support and make a complaint if they have any problems or concerns about their care.

The staff have a broad range of experience and knowledge and are able to demonstrate a good understanding of young people's needs. Staff work proactively to provide opportunities for young people to succeed. Young people's relationships with staff are positive and continue to develop, as this is a relatively new staff team. Staff promote young people's education and have experienced some success. For example, they followed a detailed transition plan enabling a young person to take national examinations and return to mainstream school. Young people have good access to a range of services that promote health and well-being and that embrace diversity and cultural heritage. However, some young people who are in the early stages of their placement do not engage with this service, which compromises their physical and emotional health.

Young people live in a comfortable, homely farmhouse, which is in a remote location, although there are some neighbouring properties which form a small community. The home has its own transport, which enables young people to access the local facilities and allows them to visit friends and relatives who are also welcomed into the home. The home is well-decorated and furnished and provides enough space for young people to have privacy should they wish. Not all young people's bedrooms and bathrooms are routinely kept clean and tidy, despite incentives and rewards being in place, which does not promote their welfare.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Most young people say they feel safe and can identify an adult in the home that they would talk to if they had any concerns. They benefit from consistent boundaries provided by a staff team who are fully trained in safeguarding issues and are confident in implementing the home's policies and procedures. However, an outcome of an investigation has not been notified to Ofsted. The home has taken appropriate action to safeguard young people. Therefore, there is minimal impact on young people's safety and welfare.

Staff recognise the particular vulnerabilities relating to the diverse needs of young people and take appropriate action to address them. Despite their efforts, some young people continue to make choices that place them at significant risk of harm. Some young people do not want to live at this home and go missing as a means of demonstrating this. Although these young people are at risk, the home is acting in accordance with the local authority care plan and the legal status of the placement. Their ability to seek independent advocacy on behalf of these young people is again hindered by the limited time that they have been in placement. Staff are proactive in communicating with placing authorities to highlight the safeguarding issues. They share information and agree strategies for working with young people that help improve the quality of young people's individual care.

When young people go missing from home, staff quickly respond and follow the procedures and protocols in place to assist the young people's safe and quick return home. However, some young people have failed to return from contact visits with family and have been missing for several days, during which time they have not been safe. Staff have developed good links with two police forces, specialist investigation teams and local safeguarding initiatives. Young people have returned home through the efforts of the partnership agreements and are beginning to engage with services that can help to protect them. Staff expressed some frustrations regarding young people who frequently go missing from home as they have limited opportunities to develop strong relationships and develop trust which assists in meeting their complex needs.

Young people are supported to develop positive behaviour. This is based on individual behaviour management plans, which focus on incentives and rewards to

help young people self-regulate their behaviours. Young people say that sanctions imposed are fair and effective. Incidents of physical restraint have reduced and there is a proactive response to any issues of bullying. All staff have received training in restraint, which they say is a last resort. However, records do not contain sufficient information to confirm this and indicate the use of restraint to enforce compliance. Restraint records are not being completed within the time required.

Sound recruitment and vetting procedures assess the suitability of adults to work with young people. Young people enjoy a safe and secure environment. There are good health and safety systems in place. Regular evacuations ensure young people know how to exit the building safely and quickly in case of an emergency.

Leadership and management

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

The home benefits from strong leadership. It is managed effectively by an experienced and qualified Registered Manager who sets clear expectations for the smooth running of the home, ably assisted by a qualified deputy manager. The Registered Manager has responsibility for the management of another of the organisation's homes in the location. The manager divides her time well between the two homes and maintains a good presence and oversight of both homes. There have been no complaints since the last inspection.

The home is well resourced, employs six staff, and meets the aims and objectives of its Statement of Purpose. The staff are able to demonstrate how their skills and knowledge assist them to implement placement plans and to provide support, which has achieved good outcomes for some young people. Staff are well supported through regular supervision, training and team meetings. This ensures they have frequent opportunities to develop their practices to meet young people's needs. Young people benefit from the home's strong commitment to a broad range of training which includes yearly refresher training in child protection and specific training in child sexual exploitation, which is being delivered to all staff. This ensures the staff have the necessary skills and knowledge to support young people to achieve their potential. Almost half the staff hold appropriate professional qualifications; newer staff are currently working to achieve these with the full support of the management team. All have relevant experience in working with children and young people and the organisation deploys them at the home specifically for their skills.

Young people benefit from the promotion of cultural awareness through different social activities and from being cared for by a team who have a good balance of age, gender and ethnicity. Young people's records are well arranged and present a good overall picture of young people's experiences at the home. However, some records are not up to date and discussions about decisions have not been shared with some young people as they have been missing for most of their short time in placement.

Monitoring systems ensure that young people enjoy good standards of care. Monthly

monitoring reports review the home's performance, young people's progress and identify areas for improvement. However, the recording of restraints has not been consistent and has not been identified by the monitoring systems. Additional in-house quality assurance visits are in place and a regularly reviewed development plan helps to drive forward further improvements. For example, planning for a summer holiday and helping to prepare and progress young people for moving on to more permanent placements in the near future. All the requirements and recommendations raised at the last inspection have been addressed showing the service is committed to continually improving their provision.

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.