

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Nicola McEvinney
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home, run by a local authority, is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to seven young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

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 **inadequate**.

The shortfalls identified at this inspection compromise the welfare and safety of young people. The incidence of young people failing to return to the home when expected or going missing puts them at risk of exploitation, involvement in criminal activity and engagement in substance abuse. Staff are familiar with multi-agency protocols on Children Missing From Care. Although, there is an absence of any guidance on what action they should take on an individual basis when a young person goes missing. This leaves young people at risk of being vulnerable when out in the community.

Young people's individual needs are not always clearly set out in their care plans and some are out of date. There are occasional times where meals provided to young people are not encouraging healthy and nutritious diets.

A small number of young people report not always feeling listened to. For example, there is a single incident where a young person's food choice was not fully respected. Also, a couple of young people feel they have not been fully consulted over the décor of their bedrooms.

Other breaches in regulations and national minimum standards include, young people's lack of engagement and attainment in education, behaviour management issues, a lack of organised activities during the day and institutional practices within the home. The admission of young people, without a detailed impact risk assessment being undertaken, further compromises the welfare of all concerned.

However, leaders and managers have recognised a number of these shortfalls and

have taken immediate action to address some of them. In particular, they have stopped admitting young people into the home while it is so unsettled.

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
13 (2001)	ensure children are provided with adequate quantities of wholesome and nutritious food which is suitable for their needs and meets their reasonable preferences (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(i)(ii) and (iii))	09/07/2012
18 (2001)	ensure children make use of educational facilities appropriate to their age, aptitude, needs, interests and potential (Regulation 18(1)(a))	03/09/2012
28 (2001)	ensure children's case files include the information, documents and records specified in Schedule 3 of this Regulation (Regulation 28(1)(a))	01/08/2012
11 (2001)	promote and make proper provision for the welfare of children accommodated by ensuring comprehensive impact risk assessments are undertaken prior to admitting a young person in the home (Regulation 11(1)(a)).	01/08/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure children's views, wishes and feelings are acted upon, in the day to day running of the home (NMS 1.1)
- develop practical skills, including shopping, buying cooking and keeping food for all young people (NMS 12.1 (e))
- ensure the home only provides admission to children whose assessed needs they can reasonably expect to meet (NMS 11.2)
- provide an environment and culture, to promote models and support positive behaviour that all staff understand and implement (NMS 3.2)
- develop young people's emotional, intellectual, social creative and physical skills by providing an accessible and stimulating environment during the day (NMS 7.1)
- ensure physical restrictions on normal movement within the home are not used

unless this is necessary to safeguard children and promote their welfare and development (10.4)

- ensure children's emotional and social development needs are promoted by having good links with specialist services (NMS 6.1 and 6.9)
- ensure young people are protected from abuse and other forms of significant harm (NMS 4.1)
- ensure that there is a strategy detailed in young people's care plan to include what action is to be taken when they go missing or engage in other risky behaviours (Volume 5, statutory guidance, para 2.83)
- keep written records detailing all individual incidents when young people go missing. (Volume 5, statutory guidance, para 2.82).

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people present some challenging behaviours and are very vulnerable. Some struggle to have a positive self-view and lack confidence.

Young people benefit from having their health needs identified, although supporting health plans are not always detailed. Staff do, however, demonstrate a good understanding of the importance of safe administration of medication. Young people are occasionally not provided with adequate quantities of wholesome and nutritious food which can compromise their health and welfare.

Some young people say that they do not feel that their views are taken into account in the running of the home and this does not promote their well-being. For example, some young people wish to have bacon for breakfast but this is not allowed except at weekends.

Generally young people's attendance at school or college is erratic. Some young people refuse to attend their education provision while others attend sporadically. This compromises their life chances. By contrast, some young people who engage with college placements have higher aspirations which are supported by staff.

Contact arrangements are set out in care plans although the majority of young people make their own arrangements. This enables young people to have contact when they choose with family members.

Young people benefit from having access to a training flat away from the home to help prepare them to live independently in a supportive environment. However, due to their lack of engagement in the day-to-day routines of the home, such as meal preparation, they are not developing skills to enable them to make a successful transition to adulthood. Although they do undertake their own laundry and keep their bedrooms tidy which promotes some independence.

Quality of care

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

The dynamics of the group do not promote positive relationships. Some interact negatively and encourage involvement in risk-taking activities which does not promote their welfare. An admission had caused a great deal of turmoil within the home that, despite their discharge, is continuing to have a negative impact on the welfare of some young people.

Each young person has an individual crisis management plan which staff base their management of behaviour on. However, sometimes individual young people can display increased challenging behaviour which staff can struggle to manage. As a consequence this leaves staff and young people at risk of harm.

Young people confirm that they know how to make a complaint and are confident their concerns would be acted upon.

Placement plans do not always set out clearly how young people should be looked after. For example, they do not have detailed health plans or detailed risk assessments. This hinders young people's individual needs being fully met so that their well-being is adequately promoted.

Young people do not always engage fully with services that are essential to help them address their complex needs. For example, although there are referrals to the children and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS), sometimes individual young people will refuse to engage. Also individual young people can occasionally be reluctant to engage with the youth offending service which may lead to further involvement with the criminal justice system.

Staff have a good awareness of their responsibility in ensuring young people receive their medication as prescribed. They know what action to take in the event of a young person not completing a course of antibiotics. This promotes young people's health.

Young people get daily opportunities to participate in activities that support their personal development, talents and abilities, including access to a variety of structured activities. However, this is only at evening, weekends and school holidays. When young people are not in any formal education they can be left to their own devices including creating their own entertainment. This lack of interaction can sometimes increase individual young people's challenging behaviour. There are missed opportunities, for example, although the home has a greenhouse and growing area, staff do not encourage young people to engage with this as a means of enhancing learning. Nevertheless a few young people have an interest in art and occasionally visit galleries with staff and have had entries in an art exhibition.

Some practices can include the locking of internal doors. For example, the pantry and the games room during school times. This can sometimes impinge on young

people's freedom of movement. More positively, internally the home is pleasantly decorated providing a comfortable environment. All bedrooms have en-suite facilities and are a good size and adequately furnished.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The majority of the young people indulge in some serious risk-taking behaviours that compromise their safety and welfare. For example, some are, involved with individuals that exploit them, engaged in criminal activity and take illegal substances.

Young people do not share fully with staff what they do when away from the home. However, staff respond promptly when young people are missing and they call staff for assistance. This demonstrates that young people trust staff and know that they will support them.

Staff have a good awareness of safeguarding issues. They are part of a child exploitation forum and work with other agencies to share information on this issue. However, despite the efforts of staff, young people put themselves in compromising situations that impact on their safety.

The incidence of young people going missing is high. In addition, there is no explicit record that makes a clear distinction between young people who go missing and those who are absent without authority. Staff follow a set protocol. However, this is generic and fails to provide clear guidance to staff about the action they should take in response to a young person's specific risks. For example, some young people are on the police computer as being at risk but do not have individual protocols informing staff of the action to take.

Some young people present very challenging and exhausting behaviour. Although there are individual crisis management plans in place these are sometimes not sufficiently detailed to guide the staff on the best way to support the behaviour. As a consequence, staff struggle to manage the level of behaviour displayed.

There have been incidences of bullying behaviour that has put young people at risk of harm which has resulted in them being moved. Young people report that there is no bullying at the current time.

Staff take very seriously their responsibility of reporting incidents where young people have been compromised by staff and these issues have been handled promptly and effectively to ensure the safety of young people.

An admission had compromised the safety and welfare of some young people. Although a planning meeting was held prior to admission, information was not forthcoming and the risks presented by individuals was not fully assessed. This has resulted in young people's further involvement in the criminal justice system.

Leadership and management

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

Young people are looked after by experienced, caring and dedicated staff but the challenges that some young people present test their skills. There are good deputising arrangements in place which ensures continuity of the management of the home. All staff have achieved the minimum recommended care qualification or are working towards it.

The Registered Manager is an experienced manager. She has detailed knowledge of the young people she is responsible for. However, young people do not always feel they gain sufficient access to the manager.

Managers have an understanding of the issues that are compromising the care of the young people and have taken steps to address these. For example, they took the decision not to admit any more young people while the home is going through this very difficult time. The Registered Manager also gave assurances that some of the shortfalls identified at this inspection will be immediately addressed. This demonstrates their willingness to improve the service for young people.

There is a comprehensive Statement of Purpose in place which informs interested parties about the provision and the support that young people can expect.

The home is monitored in line with Regulation 33. The views of young people are sought during the visits that are conducted to monitor practice. When their involvement is secured, young people's comments are generally positive. The Registered Manager is in the process of sending questionnaires out to other professionals to seek their views on how the home operates, is intended that this will inform future improvements to the service.

All areas of the home are well-maintained and in good order, there are no on-going health and safety requirements. However, there are a number of shortfalls in care planning, behaviour management and educational attainment. These significant shortfalls impact on young people's quality of care, education and safety. More positively, all previous requirements and recommendations made at the last inspection have been addressed.

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.