

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Chris Scully
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home provides care for up to four young people aged 10 to 17 years, who may experience emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service 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 enjoy positive relationships with staff. This enables them to talk about any concerns or issues they may have and to receive the right support and guidance. The staff have a secure understanding of the home's safeguarding and child protection procedures and know how to implement them. This means that they are able to take swift action to support young people and protect them from harm.

Young people's needs are appropriately met through personalised care planning. This means that young people are able to make satisfactory progress across most aspects of their welfare and development. On some occasions, information pertaining to their personal education plan is not available, which may impact upon the care provided.

Until recently, young people's attendance at school was good. Young people were making satisfactory progress and had achieved a number of qualifications. This is acknowledged by the young people's social workers and independent reviewing officers (IROs). Social workers and parents say that the home keeps them informed of the young people's progress. The home is working appropriately with other agencies and social workers to support young people's education.

Young people are cared for in a homely environment. However, there are some maintenance issues relating to young people's bedrooms and the rear of the property.

Monitoring of the home is satisfactory and has enabled the service to drive forward improvements with regards to some policies, such as the complaints and behaviour management policy. Most records and documentation are generally well maintained, though there are some shortfalls.

Young people's health needs are managed well and they are able to make informed choices about things that may impact upon their health. Young people's views are valued and respected. This is because they are encouraged to have a say in the decisions that are being made about them and the running of the home.

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
17B (2001)	ensure that the written record of any restraint is made in a volume kept for the purpose, of which shall include; the location and time of the use of the measure, a description of the measure used and description of any injuries to a child or any other person and any medical treatment. (Regulation 17B (3) (c) (d) (g))	17/05/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the home is well maintained; in particular, damaged bedroom furniture, peeling and rusty paint in the rear yard (NMS 10.3)
- ensure that information about young people is clearly recorded and in a way that will be helpful to them now or in the future; in particular, key worker records, pocket money and clothing allowance records (NMS 22.5)
- ensure that young people are treated as individuals with regards to behaviour management plans and strategies (NMS 2.1)
- ensure that staff have up-to-date information about each child's education; in particular, their personal education plan (NMS 8.7)
- ensure that an up-to-date version of the statement of purpose is available to the responsible authority and to Ofsted (NMS 13.1)
- ensure that the young people's guide details how young people can contact Ofsted if they wish to raise a concern with inspectors. (NMS 13.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are very aware of their family history and background. They are able to sustain positive relationships with those people who are important to them and build new relationships with their peers.

Young people are being appropriately prepared for adulthood, dependant upon their age and stage of development. They are confident to use public transport to visit friends and family and are able to manage their own finances. Young people are encouraged to undertake a range of household tasks, such as cleaning their bedrooms and helping to prepare meals and snacks. This is supported by the introduction of independent living plans, which enable young people to see what they can already achieve and identify areas for future development.

Young people benefit from good levels of contact with their families. They are well supported by staff who are aware of their needs and vulnerabilities. Young people are able to contact families and friends on their mobile telephones or house phone. This helps them to sustain important relationships.

Young people are aware of their own health care needs. They show increasing maturity when dealing with difficult situations. This has resulted in a decline in some risk-taking behaviours which have a negative impact upon their health and well-being. They are fully aware of their own health care needs, such as the importance of attending appointments. They are beginning to take responsibility for these. Young people are aware of the potential health issues associated with smoking and substance misuse. However, some young people choose to continue to engage in these activities.

Young people are aware of the support agencies available to them, such as child and adolescent mental health teams, sexual health and drug advisory services. This means that young people are able to make informed choices about their health. Young people are able to attend health care appointments on their own or with a member of staff for support.

Young people have educational placements and are making satisfactory progress. Young people are aware of the importance of education and have achieved a number of GCSEs. However, recent events have impacted upon young people's attendance at school. They receive support and encouragement to re-engage with their education. IROs acknowledge this and say that until recently, young people were making positive progress at school. School reports show that young people were making steady progress and their attendance had significantly increased.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from a stable, competent staff team, with whom they enjoy

positive, trusting relationships. Staff genuinely care about young people and want them to achieve to their full potential. Staff report that most young people are settled at the home and are confident to talk to them about any issues they may have. Young people did not participate in the inspection process on this occasion.

Young people are generally well behaved and respond appropriately to staff requests. They are aware of the house rules and generally abide by these, such as returning home on time in the evening. Parents confirm that the home provides consistent boundaries which have had a positive impact upon young people; for example, by helping them to consider the impact their behaviour has upon other people.

The home has a recently revised behaviour management policy, which is about to be implemented. However, young people do not have individualised behaviour management plans in place to address specific issues. This makes it more difficult for the staff fully to address some behavioural issues.

Staff are very aware of the support agencies available to young people and work in partnership with them. They talk to young people about these services and at the young people's request, they arrange appointments for them. This provides alternative avenues for young people to consider their behaviour and to develop coping strategies.

Young people are actively encouraged to have a say in what happens within the home and to contribute to the decisions made about them. Young people are able to attend their reviews and other meetings. This means that young people are able to have their views heard and to understand the reasons behind the decision-making process.

Young people are aware of how to raise any concerns they may have about the setting. There have been some complaints from young people since the last inspection. Appropriate action has been taken to address their concerns. Young people say they are happy with the way their concerns have been handled.

Young people are cared for in line with their individual placement plans. Staff are aware of the plans and assist young people to achieve their individual goals. Young people's individual needs and wishes are acknowledged, such as their desire to return home. Social workers say that the Registered Manager and staff are responsive to any points raised and keep social workers informed of any issues within the home.

The Registered Manager and staff have positive relationships with the young people's families. This enables them to provide a consistent approach to managing any issues and to support young people. Parents say that the staff are always willing to talk to them and other members of the family. Parents welcome this, as it means they are fully aware of what is happening with their child. They say they are happy with the care provided to young people.

Young people have access to a wide range of services to support their physical, emotional and psychological health care needs. Young people are able to independently request access to these services for support. Consequently, young people are taking responsibility for their own health and well-being. Staff are aware of triggers that may impact upon young people's health. This enables them to offer effective support to young people and help them to receive the right support at the right time. There are appropriate systems in place for the storage and safe administration of medication.

Staff continue to have positive aspirations for young people's education. Staff recognise the importance of attending education and gaining qualifications which will enhance young people's career prospects. Staff are consistently working with schools and educational support services to assist young people's educational achievements. Staff are proud that young people have gained some qualifications and are keen for them to carry on with their education. Staff attend parents' evenings and liaise well with schools. This includes talking to teachers about how they can support young people's education at home.

School reports are in place and show how young people are progressing, such as increase in their attendance. However, the home does not have up-to-date personal education plans in place for some young people. This may impact upon their ability to provide more effective support. A range of leisure activities are offered to all young people. These take into account their hobbies, interests and specific requests. Staff say that young people really enjoyed their trips to theme parks and Blackpool. All activities are planned in consultation with young people.

The home provides pleasant, homely accommodation. Young people are able to personalise their rooms, with photographs, posters and other personal items. Currently, all bedrooms are the same colour, although young people have been consulted as to future colour schemes for their rooms. Young people have access to a well-resourced games room where they can relax and enjoy a variety of games. The home is appropriately secure, which means that unauthorised persons cannot gain access.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are safeguarded because staff have a good understanding of the home's child protection and safeguarding procedures. This means staff are able to take effective action should they have any concerns about a young person's safety or well-being. Staff receive ongoing training in relation to safeguarding. Staff are aware of the young people's individual and diverse needs and vulnerabilities. This enables them to put clear strategies and risk assessments into place to help keep young people safe.

Young people are aware of who they can talk to if they have any concerns; for example, their key worker, Registered Manager or social worker. Young people feel

valued, because they are listened to. This is because the home responds effectively to any concerns and ensures the appropriate persons are informed. Consequently, they are able to ensure the safety of young people and all other parties involved during any investigations.

Young people going missing from care has declined significantly since the last inspection. Police liaison officers say the home is 'doing a good job'. This is due to the commitment of the Registered Manager and staff who work consistently with the police to help keep young people safe. The Registered Manager is proactive in sourcing the contact details of young people's friends, family and associates. This enables the home to conduct a systematic search for young people should they fail to return home. This means young people who are missing return home quickly and safely. Staff are committed to ensuring young people who are on specific curfews return home on time so that they are not in breach of these timescales. They work well with young people to help them to understand the potential consequences of failing to return home on time.

Young people are developing an awareness of their own safety; for example, the consequences of going missing. Young people generally let staff know where they are going. Staff and young people are able to keep in touch via their mobile telephones, which helps to safeguard young people if they need assistance.

Appropriate generic behaviour management strategies are in place and are consistently applied. This means young people are aware of the consequences of inappropriate behaviour. Restraints are very rarely used. Staff are trained to carry these out safely and to record the incidents. One entry has been made in the restraint record. However, some information is not recorded; for example, the time and location of the intervention and whether there were any injuries to staff or the young people. This does not impact upon the carrying out of the restraint and some of this information is held within other records.

Bullying is not an issue for these young people. Appropriate systems are in place to provide assistance to young people should this occur.

The home is safe and appropriately maintained. However there are some maintenance issues which detract from the homely environment that the home is striving to achieve. This includes peeling paint, damaged bedroom furniture and mould on the tiles in the bathroom.

Young people are kept safe because staff ask for proof of identification from all visitors to the home and ensure that they are appropriately supervised. All visitors to the home are required to sign in and out the premises; although on some occasions they fail to sign out at the end of the visit. All safety checks are carried out within the prescribed timescales, such as electrical and gas checks. The home works effectively with fire services to enhance young people's understanding of fire safety and the potential dangers associated with smoking. This means young people are provided with information to help keep themselves safe.

Leadership and management

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

The home is appropriately managed by a caring and committed Registered Manager. The Registered Manager has instigated several changes since the last inspection, which have improved upon the safety of young people. These include the revision of the behaviour management policy to make this more robust. The complaints policy has been amended to ensure this meets their regulatory requirements and fully supports the complainant. The Registered Manager consulted with the local authority designated officer and complaints officer to ratify these changes. This promotes transparency and the home's commitment to working in partnership with others.

The management monitoring of the home is appropriate. Reports by the responsible person and the registered manager are well within the prescribed timescales. Records and documentation are checked. Effective procedures are in place to ensure that all appropriate persons are informed of any significant events pertaining to young people, staff or the home.

The home has addressed the issues from the last inspection. The safety of young people, staff and visitors has been enhanced as risk assessments now cover the whole of the property. This means staff are generally able to identify and minimise any potential risks. The recording systems have improved, in that young people's names are now recorded in full within individual records.

The statement of purpose and young people's guide provide sufficient information to placing authorities, young people and families. However, some social workers do not appear to have a copy of the statement of purpose and the most up-to-date version has not been sent to Ofsted. The young people's guide is informative and provides young people with a flavour of the care and support they can expect to receive. However, it does not contain the contact details for Ofsted. Although this is an omission on behalf of the home, young people have ample opportunities and are confident to raise concerns with the home, their advocates or social worker.

Records pertaining to young people are appropriately stored to maintain confidentiality. Entries in records are unusually clearly recorded. However, the systems for recording young people's pocket monies and clothing allowances are not sufficiently robust, as there are some discrepancies in the running total. This is an accumulative effect, as an earlier mistake had not been identified. Key worker sessions are not consistently recorded. This means that on occasion, insufficient information is recorded to enable young people to move forward, when they access their records now or in the future.

Staff work well together as a team. All staff hold a recognised childcare qualification or are in the process of completing one. Staff say they are well supported by the Registered Manager and are confident to talk to them and raise any concerns. A training plan is in place which means staff are able to keep up-to-date with their training. Staff say that the opportunities to attend courses on alcohol awareness and

sexual exploitation has enabled them to reflect upon the strategies in place and improve upon their ability to identify potential triggers. There are sufficient appropriately trained, supervised and supported staff of both genders working directly with young people to meet their needs.

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.