

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	09/05/2013
Inspector	Jennie Christopher / Emeline Evans
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	06/03/2013
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home accommodates up to five young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home is owned and managed by a local authority. At the time of this inspection there are three young people living in the home.

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 enjoy increasingly positive relationships with staff and are starting to progress in most areas of their lives as a result. Young people are generally positive about the home and staff, suggesting they are supported to overcome barriers and challenges in their lives. Young people feel listened to and that most staff are concerned for their well-being. Staff are working hard to form effective relationships with parents, carers, education and a wide range of specialist services, to embed a cohesive approach to care. Social workers comment that staff are proactive and communicate effectively with them. Young people are benefitting as a result of improved relationships in an increasingly nurturing environment with clear boundaries.

The home management and senior team are currently bolstered by additional external management intervention. This is enabling them to guide and motivate the staff group, who feel increasingly supported. Young people benefit as a result of greater staff commitment and improved consistency of approach. Young people are supported to live in a group and to value others opinions and beliefs. Bullying is however a concern. Young people are actively involved in consultation and service development through regular house meetings and individual work.

Both the homes and the additional management team are striving for improvement. They are aware of the strengths and weaknesses within the home, services provided and structures. There are several areas for improvement identified as a result of this inspection. They include: updating various documents and policies, including the child protection and safeguarding policy, including responding to bullying, the

Statement of Purpose, young person's guide and risk assessments; improving monitoring of incidents of young people being missing from care, support for transition and gaining skills for adulthood, reporting notifications, submitting managers monitoring to Ofsted and gaining consent for the use of electronic surveillance.

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)	revise the Statement of Purpose to ensure clarity regarding staff roles and qualifications and to include the use of alarmed external doors as detailed in Schedule 1 point 4 and 19 (Regulation 4(1))	28/06/2013
16 (2001)	update the written policy which is intended to safeguard children accommodated in the home from abuse or neglect, including grooming and exploitation, and for it to clearly set out the procedure to be followed in the event of any allegation of abuse or neglect (Regulation 16(1)(a)(b))	28/06/2013
16 (2001)	implement the policy for the prevention of bullying clearly and effectively (Regulation 16(4))	28/06/2013
22 (2001)	ensure consent is sought from placing authorities for the use of surveillance (CCTV and alarmed external doors) in the management of children's safety and behaviour within the grounds of the home and that this is recorded in each child's placement plan (Regulation 22 (1))	28/06/2013
30 (2001)	ensure that if any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 5 takes place, the registered person without delay, notifies all relevant persons as indicated in column 2. (Regulation 30(1))	28/06/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure risk assessments are implemented proportionately including preventative strategies as well as identified risks (NMS 4.5)
- implement a system to evaluate trends, patterns and reasons why young people go missing from care to inform staff practice and further protect young people

(NMS 5)

- review risk assessments of the whole children's home environment, with specific regard to fire extinguishers which are locked away and the use of internal locks on cupboards and doors (NMS 10.8)
- ensure young people's care and planning prepares them effectively for adulthood (NMS 12)
- ensure the young people's guide contains contact details for external advocacy services and children's rights officers (NMS 13.5)
- implement a system to notify within 24 hours the persons and appropriate authorities of significant events in accordance with Regulation 30 (NMS 24.1)
- ensure reports of Schedule 6 monitoring are forwarded to Ofsted six monthly. (Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph 3.14)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **adequate**.

Young people make sound progress in all aspects of their lives, in relation to their starting points. They benefit from individualised support and make steps towards improved confidence, self-esteem and understanding of their personal history. Each young person is valued as an individual and staff's positive regard provides the foundation to develop appropriate relationships with peers and family. Promotion of health means young people have an understanding of healthy lifestyles and what this means for them. Increased support from staff and external specialist agencies ensures young people are able to understand their risk-taking behaviours and consider reducing them. However incidents of substance misuse and being missing from care continue to be a significant concern.

Involvement in education is varied. Young people of statutory education age are engaged in virtual learning programmes. Joint working between the home and education staff enables young people to progress and achieve in line with their individual targets. Those who are approaching or are at school leaving age do not have plans in place for their future education and training. However joint working between staff and support agencies are encouraging young people to engage in education and training to improve their life chances and outcomes. Young people have some positive relationships in the community, accessing local shops and sports and leisure activities. Young people also positively contribute to the home environment through activities such as gardening and building structures for vegetable allotments.

Whilst living in the home young people learn limited practical skills for adult life, such as household cleaning tasks and cooking meals. Young people do not use these skills effectively and do not take responsibility for completing tasks in preparation for moving on to independence or their next identified placement.

Quality of care

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

Young people develop as a result of constructive relationships with staff who are concerned with all aspects of their welfare. Young people are positive about staff and observed interactions are supportive. Enabling young people to express themselves is central to the service. Routine consultation with young people through house meetings and individual sessions ensures their views are sought and when possible acted upon. Examples include young people choosing décor, new equipment for the home and activities. Young people are encouraged to be involved in their reviews and in house care planning. When their wishes cannot be acted upon, they are supported to understand this through group and individual work.

Staff consistently have strong aspirations for young people in their care. Social workers say staff are, 'prepared to go the extra mile' to ensure young people understand their future options. This includes visiting possible moving on placements and colleges. Staff support educational placements with good communication between home and education. Those moving onto post-16 education do not currently have support packages in place, however staff encourage young people to overcome barriers and consider further education and training. The changing needs of young people are monitored and plans updated by staff with increasing consultation, where appropriate, with parents, social workers and other professionals.

Young people mostly enjoy good health with limited use of prescribed medication. Young people attend all required medical appointments and there are close links with the Looked After Children's nurse. Specialist substance misuse workers and mental and emotional health specialists work with staff to guide on consistency of approach to support young people's emotional well-being. The developing staff cohesion has helped with consistent responses to unwanted behaviours. Medication is stored appropriately and there is a thorough system to ensure safety when administering. In case of emergency, there are several first aiders on site at all times.

The generally well-maintained building is homely in parts, although consideration given to safety and security makes it feel institutional in parts, particularly with the use of locks. There are many areas for independent or group interaction, with all spaces being well used by young people. Young people have access to independent advocates when required and know how to make complaints and who to complain to. The result of complaints has led to changes in the home and improvements in staff practice when appropriate.

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 staff do what they can to keep them safe in the home. They do not feel bullying is currently an issue, but has been in the past. Young people say that staff listen and support them when there are incidents of

bullying. However, records are not clear and there is not concise evidence that young people's concerns have been followed up. Staff are confident in processes to follow should they be concerned for a young person's safety or welfare and know the homes and local child protection procedures. Policies within the home are outdated and do not reflect lessons learned locally and nationally, such as identifying signs of exploitation. Staff are aware of individual young people's vulnerabilities and work to promote the safety of all young people.

Young people go missing from care and although this has reduced recently, there is insufficient evidence to suggest this is as a result of new strategies that have been recently implemented. Currently there is limited evaluation of the triggers and patterns of incidents when young people go missing from care in order to interrupt patterns of behaviour. Staff are aware what to do should young people be missing and there are plans for increased joint working with the local specialist police team. Incidences of risk taking behaviours such as substance misuse have currently reduced although a great deal of work has been done in this area, it still remains an issue. Individual files contain up-to-date photographs of young people in case of emergency. The organisations recruitment policy ensures young people are protected from harm by thorough personnel checks.

Individualised positive behaviour plans reward young people through incentives such as go karting. Young people feel this is a relatively effective approach. Sanctions are proportionate and young people are increasingly encouraged to reflect on their behaviour and consider how future responses could be different. There is limited use of restraint and all incidents are recorded appropriately.

Young people are safe from fire and other hazards as a result of thorough checks and procedures. The use of locks on doors and placement of fire extinguishers in locked areas has not been subject to a recent risk assessment to ensure appropriateness or safety. Young people's risk assessments focus on risk rather than positive strategies to reduce the impact of the concern. However they do allow young people to take age appropriate risk in line with their peers.

Leadership and management

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

The home currently has additional senior and external management intervention to provide a greater understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. As a result a thorough action plan has been devised to move the home forwards and improve outcomes for young people. As this intervention is recent, much of the plan is yet to be implemented and therefore is yet to be evaluated for effectiveness. The majority of staff are positive about the changes being implemented and feel it is helping them 'work as a team' to support young people. Alongside the action plan, manager's monthly checks are used to demonstrate the impact living in the home has for young people. However a six monthly review has not been forwarded to Ofsted. Regulation 33 reports are sound and shortfalls that are identified through

monitoring are usually rectified. Events that require notification to Ofsted are not always forwarded and those that are, are not within 24 hours of the event taking place. The provider meets the aims and objectives as set out in the Statement of Purpose and staff fully understand the functions, purpose and ethos of the home. The document however lacks clarity with regard to staff structure and qualifications. It also does not state use of the alarmed external door. The young people's guide contains a great deal of information but does not contain how to access external advocacy.

The home demonstrates a renewed commitment to multi-agency working to improve outcomes for young people. Specialist substance misuse support is available to support both young people and staff. Other health services are actively involved to encourage good care and outcomes for young people. Services that are not performing are challenged, for example, emails to a social worker ensure essential meetings are arranged. Young people are also supported to complain when appropriate, for example about the placing authorities plan for their future care. Young people's complaints regarding the home or staff are thoroughly investigated and have led to change in practice within the home. There have been no complaints from the community and relationships are positive.

The newly invigorated and enthusiastic staff team are making strides to effectively care for young people. There are some vacancies within the team although a consistent team of bank and agency staff ensure the current shortages do not negatively impact on young people's care. Training needs are identified in yearly appraisals and through regular supervision. Newly appointed staff complete an induction programme specific to the service, based on the Children's Workforce Development Council's induction standards.

Requirements and recommendations from the previous inspection have been met, although some only partially. As a result the requirements to effectively implement the bullying policy and procedure and to gain consent from placing authorities regarding the use of electronic surveillance remain.

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.