

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Maureen Hamer
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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.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service that exceeds minimum requirements

Satisfactory: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home accommodates up to five young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties between the ages of 10 and 17. The home is owned and managed by a local authority. At the time of the inspection, there were four young people in the home.

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **satisfactory**.

The needs of individual young people are assessed and are met to a satisfactory level. The acting manager and the core staff group work as a cohesive team to provide consistent boundaries and to safeguard young people. There is improvement in some outcomes for young people. However the capacity of staff to meet all the needs of some young people is challenged due to the level of need of young people and the need to use staff from external agencies. This impacts on the consistency of care and is a key area for improvement.

There were four young people in the home at the time of inspection.

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
25 (2001)	ensure that there is at all times a sufficient number of suitably qualified, competent and experienced persons working at the children's home (Regulation (25) (1))	26/08/2011
4 (2001)	ensure the children's guide includes the address and telephone number of the HMCI (Regulation (4) (3)(C))	26/08/2011
15 (2001)	ensure that children accommodated in the home are provided at reasonable times with access to the following facilities which they may use without reference to persons working in the home - a telephone on which to make and receive telephone calls in private (Regulation 15 (4) (a))	26/08/2011
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline in a children's home, a written	12/08/2011

	record is made in a volume (Regulation (17B) (3) (4))	
20 (2001)	ensure that at all times, at least one person on duty at the children's home has a suitable first aid qualification. (Requirement (20) (e))	12/08/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure that restraint is not used to force compliance with instructions where significant harm or serious damage to property are not otherwise likely (NMS 3.14)
- ensure staff know and implement the local authority and home's policy in relation to children going missing and their role in implementing that policy (NMS 5.2)
- ensure that no more than half the staff on duty at any one time, by day or night, at the home are from an external agency. (NMS 17.8)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Staff work with young people to understand their backgrounds and reasons for their placement, helping them to develop trusting relationships and to settle in the home. Young people are registered and engaged with local National Health Services; this contributes to normalising young people's lives and provides them with access to a wide range of services to meet their health needs. Young people are provided with advice and support to reduce risk from harmful behaviours. Not all shifts are covered by a member of staff with a first aid qualification impacting on the ability of the home to provide emergency treatment to young people.

Staff successfully engage with the young people's schools and improvement in attendance and behaviour at school is demonstrated. Young people do have supervised internet access in the home and this contributes to broadening their access to educational resources. Plans have been agreed for a young person to continue to be accommodated in the home post 16 years of age and to attend college.

The amount of damage done to the home by young people has diminished and the young people's rooms are cared for by young people demonstrating increased respect for themselves and each other. Staff support young people to maintain positive relationships with friends and family. There is evidence of significant improvement in relationships between some young people and their parents; this improvement has contributed to a reduction in risk taking behaviour.

Quality of care

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

Young people's needs are assessed by experienced staff. A key worker acts to ensure that young people's views are listened to and are acted upon. Prior to being accommodated young people are visited in their previous placement and they are provided with information about the home. This approach reduces young people's anxiety and promotes positive relationships. However there are examples of inappropriate placement reducing the staff's capacity to respond effectively to some aspects of young people's needs.

Staff listen to the young people's views and respond to them in a constructive manner. The home works with partners such as Child and Adolescent Services to provide additional support to meet young people's emotional needs. Young people have keys to their own personalised bedrooms showing respect for young people's privacy. Most young people have mobile telephones; there is a landline that young people can access but only with permission.

There are two reported complaints by young people that have been managed well. There are regular house meetings at which young people can raise and discuss concerns. The Children's Guide does not hold the address and telephone details of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector.

Young people meet with their key worker every two weeks, and often more frequently. This engages young people in reviewing their progress. Handover meetings are held every day and all staff are informed of relevant information to promote a consistent approach to young people's care. The home produces a weekly and monthly report for the social worker, which feeds into the young people's reviews.

A range of measures, individualised to meet the needs of the young people, are put in place to ensure young people attend school on a regular basis. Staff communicate with schools to ensure continuity of support on a range of issues including gaining access to further education to enable continuation of young people's educational opportunities. Access to activities outside of the home, that interest young people and develop their self-confidence, is encouraged.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people state that they feel safe. They do, however, participate in risk taking behaviours that increase their vulnerability to harm. Staff work with other agencies to assess risk and to work with young people to reduce risk of harm. Individual vulnerabilities of young people are identified by staff. Staff work successfully with young people to find ways to reduce the incidence of young people going missing, and being absent without consent, to enhance their safety. However risk assessments are not always completed. Young people report incidents of bullying between young people and staff do intervene to support the victim, reduce such incidents and to protect young people. The home has appropriately involved the police to investigate a recent aggressive incident. Staff take appropriate action in the event of an allegation or disclosure from a young person to safeguard young people from harm.

Young people exhibit challenging behaviour and the staff work as a team to promote and reward positive behaviour. Young people are encouraged to reflect on their emotions and to understand how they influence their behaviour. Staff spend time with young people exploring how their behaviour impacts on others. This encourages young people to develop insight into their behaviours. Staff use de-escalation techniques and there has been a reduction in the incidence of physical restraints. Full-time bank and agency staff are trained in the use of physical restraints, occasionally agency staff are used that are not trained. Use of physical restraints are comprehensively recorded and reviewed by the acting manager but they are not always recorded in the log book in a timely manner impacting on the accuracy of recording. In addition, occasionally, the records states that restraint is used to gain compliance.

Young people benefit from living in a home which provides physical safety and security. Fire safety checks are up to date. Risk assessments are in place for the building. Electrical and gas appliances are regularly checked and maintained ensuring a safe physical environment.

Leadership and management

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

The manager has recently returned from secondment. In his absence the home has been managed by an acting manager who is trusted and respected by young people and staff. The home has a core of committed and experienced staff. The home has successfully recruited four new members of staff who will be soon appointed. However due to staff vacancies a significant number of agency staff have been employed, leading to some inconsistencies in care. Fortunately four of the full time agency staff have been provided with additional training for example physical restraint training, this provides some stability for young people who view these staff as permanent. However the ratio of agency to permanent staff is at times too high.

All staff including agency staff are provided with good support using regular supervision and regular staff meetings. The organisation provides training opportunities for staff and all staff are engaged in a National Vocational Qualification at level 3.

The last inspection made two requirements that were met and one recommendation. The home's safeguarding procedures now clarify who staff should contact in the event of a young person making an allegation and the Statement of Purpose provides information on the age of young people accommodated in the home. The recommendation promoted agency staff who worked on a regular basis in the home be trained in the use of physical intervention and this recommendation has largely been met improving the safety of young people.

Young people and the staff team benefit from positive management and a respectful relationship with the acting manager. Regulation 33 visits are undertaken to assess the standard of care. Regulation 34 reporting is carried out and the manager understands the impact of lack of a stable workforce on young people. Staff have also been engaged in assessing the implications of the new national minimum standards.

Equality and diversity practice is **satisfactory**.