

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Robin Whistlecraft
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The children's home is run by a private organisation and is registered to provide care and accommodation for two young people with emotional or 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 **adequate**.

This home provides an adequate quality of care to young people. The atmosphere is warm and friendly but staff ensure that boundaries are clear. Some young people are making progress in the home, both in changing behaviour and taking responsibility for that. The home has been insufficiently robust in monitoring whether it has all the statutory information it needs from placing authorities. It has also been insufficiently robust in pressing placing social workers to carry out agreed actions in relation to some young people's health. This has meant that, while young people's health appears generally good, assessments and specific referrals have not been made.

Young people enjoy a range of leisure activities and exert significant influence over their activities and daily diet. Unfortunately, some young people's diet lacks variety and is not wholesome. The home operates a regime that ensures young people learn basic independence skills, and rewards general compliance. However, plans to manage behaviour and risks are generally reactive and do not promote individual positive behaviour. However, staff do praise appropriate behaviour and the home operates a reward system for compliance with daily routines and expectations. Similarly, although the home generally maintains adequate records, it does not formally assess young people's progress against placement plans and its own records. However, staff and people outside of the home are able to describe how young people have made progress, with improved stability, maturity and self-responsibility.

The home provides enough staff for its purpose and young people are safe and say they feel safe and cared for in the home.

The home has satisfactorily addressed requirements and recommendations from previous inspections. The management's development plan and system for monitoring and identifying ways to improve the quality of care indicate that the home has the capacity to improve.

This report contains nine requirements for areas for improvement. These relate to updating its Statement of Purpose and children's guide; ensuring that placement plans are available in the home; following up actions from placement plans and reviews; young people's diet; providing a telephone for young people; adjusting how incidents involving the use of physical restraint are recorded; adjusting the use of bedroom door alarms and ensuring they feature in placement plans; and providing some training to staff.

The report also contains two recommendations for improvements. These are in relation to the children's guide and introducing periodic written assessments of young people's progress.

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)	compile in relation to the children's home a written statement (in these Regulations referred to as the "statement of purpose" which shall consist of a statement of the matters listed in Schedule 1. This is in relation to setting out the experience of staff working in the home (Regulation 4(1) Schedule 1 (5))	14/09/2012
4 (2001)	produce a guide to the children's home ("the children's guide") which shall include the address and telephone number of the HMCI (Regulation 4 (3)(c))	14/09/2012
12 (2001)	cooperate with the child's placing authority in agreeing and signing the plan for the child's placement prepared in accordance with the provisions in Regulation 9 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010. This is in relation to obtaining the placement plan before, or within 5 days of the placement being made (Regulation 12A (1))	14/09/2012
15 (2001)	ensure that children accommodated in the home are provided at all 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))	14/09/2012
17B	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of	14/09/2012

(2001)	control, restraint or discipline in a children's home a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose. This is in relation to recording the child's behaviour leading to the use of the restraint so that the appropriateness of the use of restraint can be properly monitored (Regulation 17B (3))	
20 (2001)	promote and protect the physical, emotional and mental health of children accommodated in a children's home. This is in relation to ensuring that all assessments, referrals and treatments that are required or recommended take place even where primary responsibility rests with another agency (Regulation 20(1))	14/09/2012
22 (2001)	ensure that electronic or mechanical monitoring devices for the surveillance of children are not used in a children's home except for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child concerned, or other children accommodated in the children's home, and where it is provided for in the child's placement plan (Regulation 22 (1))	14/09/2012
27 (2001)	ensure that all person's employed by him receive appropriate training, supervision and appraisal. This is in relation to knowledge of what constitutes a varied, wholesome and nutritious diet; and knowledge of respective responsibilities within and outside of the home for dealing with possible child abuse. (Regulation 27 (4)(a))	14/09/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure that young people's physical and emotional and social development needs are promoted. This is in relation to improving the dietary intake of some young people (NMS 6.)
- ensure the children's guide includes a summary of what the home sets out to do for young people, how they can find their rights, how a young person can contact their IRO, the Children's Rights Director, Ofsted if they wish to raise a concern with inspectors, and how to secure access to an independent advocate (NMS 13.5)
- ensure that information about children is recorded clearly and in a way which will be helpful to the child when they access their files now and in the future. This is in relation to making and maintaining clear and consistent daily and summary records that are linked to placement plans and demonstrate the progress that young people make. (NMS 22.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are making progress in managing frustration and reducing risks by changing their behaviour. Young people whose behaviour puts them at risk of offending reduce that behaviour significantly. Staff working in the home, families and social workers are able describe some young people developing trust in others, showing maturity, developing self-confidence and social skills, the ability to cope and taking ownership of their lives. These observations indicate that some young people are developing personal insights and emotional resilience as well.

The home's regime routinely expects young people to contribute in certain ways. These include assisting with some meal preparation, cleaning their own rooms and assisting with their laundry. Young people influence the operation of the home in so far as they actively participate in choosing leisure activities and décor when parts of the home are due for redecoration.

Young people are generally healthy. The home closely involves young people in choosing food for menus. The home is encountering difficulties in persuading some young people to follow a healthy diet, despite trying various approaches. The result is that, for some young people, menus are limited and involve a lot of processed food. This means that those young people are not receiving a balanced and varied diet, although the relevant health assessments have not identified this as currently having an adverse impact. Staff have not received training in what constitutes a varied, wholesome and nutritious diet, although the manager has proposed healthy eating for this year's training plan. This means that they are unable to be imaginative in providing alternative foods that are attractive to young people but are varied and wholesome.

Young people have good attendance at school or college, especially in relation to their starting point before coming to live in the home. Young people's achievement in school or education is satisfactory. Some have achieved well and have gained places on specialised courses.

The home supports young people to have appropriate contact with friends and family. This includes encouragement to write letters where face-to-face contact has not been possible. Young people without a mobile telephone are unable to make telephone calls unless they ask staff to use the home's portable telephone. Although young people have not complained about staff not giving them the portable telephone, they should have access to a telephone without having to ask.

Young people acquire basic skills in preparation for adulthood. These skills are in relation to cooking, cleaning, personal hygiene and personal laundry. Young people gain these skills as part of the home's general regime. Staff work with young people so they learn these skills, with support and guidance, while they live in the home. The home relies on placing authorities to provide support for more comprehensive independence training.

Quality of care

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

Young people generally interact positively with each other and get on well with staff. Staff set clear, consistent and appropriate boundaries through the home's regime of routines, expectations and a routine-based reward system. Staff challenge anti-social behaviour. Visitors to the home have described it as 'warm and friendly'. This means that young people benefit from a supportive and consistent structure around them.

Young people are routinely able to influence basic matters affecting their lives in the home, if they wish. Sometimes the matters can be more significant such as helping choose décor or being involved in interviews when new staff are selected. Young people know how to make a complaint and the home reinforces this by displaying leaflets about the processes in communal space. The home involves young people in weekly individual sessions to express their wishes about such things as leisure activities and, when the situation arises, choosing décor for the home. Young people often choose not to sit and talk about other matters, and there is not a forum for staff and young people to meet as a group.

The home has installed alarms to young people's bedroom doors. These operate throughout the day when staff are awake and present in the building, and not just at night after young people have settled. The sounders alarms are not intrusive in the general life of the home and young people have not complained about this system. However, the system is not proportionate to the degree of risk to their welfare. The use of bedroom alarms does not feature in young people's placement plans.

Some young people's care is in line with their placement plan. For other young people, the home is less able to demonstrate this because the placing authority had not provided the placement plan. However, the home prudently listed needs and placement goals when the young person came to live in the home. The home also, during this inspection, firmly pressed the responsible social worker to provide the placement plan. Though the care provided reflects the home's own notes, this situation means that some young people receive care that is not assured by formal agreements and plans.

The arrangements for the administration of medicines are safe. Young people have access to health services. However, such access can be limited if the home does not monitor plans and agreements to ensure that actions required of other parties take place. For example, the home had not pressed hard for a copy of a placement plan, which includes the young person's health plan. Nor had the home identified that a placing social worker had not organised a 'looked after children' medical assessment after admission. In another instance, the home had not followed up a recent looked after children medical assessment in which the nurse recorded asking the social worker to make a referral to the child and adolescent mental health service. Although primarily the responsibility of other agencies, the lack of speedy advocacy by the home means that young people are not always having access to health services as soon as they ought to. However, there had not been an identified adverse impact on young people

Staff support and promote young people's attendance in education. This is through providing prompts, keeping in regular contact with schools and attending events such as parents' evenings if required.

The home has a staff team which represents a number of cultures, and so provides positive role models for a multicultural society. Staff understand that young people have individual needs, which may include such things as food, culture and religion, to which there should be no obstacles. The home supports and encourages young people to enjoy a wide range of community-based leisure facilities, as well as indoor and outdoor games within the home itself. The home is in an appropriate location and is appropriately designed for its purpose and size.

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 in the home and they are safe. They also confirmed that they do not experience bullying. They say they have an adult they can talk to. Young people do not go missing from the home although the home has adopted the local children's services department's protocol for dealing with young people who go missing.

The use of physical restraint is minimised and, where it is used, young people are safeguarded by staff who are trained in its use. The entries made in the home's dedicated record book do not give enough information about young people's behaviour leading to the use of the measure. Other records do contain the necessary information, so this shortfall does not have an adverse impact on the independent monitoring of the home's practices.

The home maintains individual risk assessments for the young people, and reviews these regularly, updating them proactively, as necessary rather than simply waiting for set review dates. The risk assessments are largely reactive in nature in that they identify known or emerging risks and identify actions in response to the risk. Staff regularly praise young people for behaving appropriately when they might have chosen a different response. The home's reward system is essentially generic, rewarding young people for complying with the same aspects of the home's regime and expectations.

The home carries out appropriate vetting checks on new staff before they start working with young people. The home's premises are safe and secure, with hazardous chemicals stored in a locked cupboard. The home has fitted appropriate locks to bathroom doors so that young people can maintain appropriate privacy.

Some staff do not have enough knowledge of the respective responsibilities of staff in the home and external agencies in the event of suspected or alleged child abuse. Instead, some staff rely too much on management to take the appropriate action, rather than knowing who such matters need to be referred to. This means that young people may not be safeguarded by independent investigation of suspected

abuse as quickly as possible.

Leadership and management

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

The home has addressed the requirements and recommendations from the last inspection. In relation to staff training, it is evident that the home has created a training plan for the home, including additional training such as in relation to drugs misuse. However, although staff discuss the value of the training, the manager has not fully introduced systematic and recorded evaluation of the training.

The home's internal and external line management carry out appropriate periodic audits and checks on the home's records and other provision. The home has a development plan, for review in 2013. Managers have built the plan on known issues needing development, although the plan itself does not refer to the sources or reasons for the matters targeted for improvement. Managers have introduced a system for periodically reviewing and improving the quality of care in the home. The home has also introduced surveys for young people, social workers and young people's families. The home has yet to integrate these surveys into the periodic reviews of the quality of care but they are an effective way of gaining feedback about performance. These approaches mean that young people benefit from care that managers are seeking to improve from experience and objective information.

The home has an accurate Statement of Purpose that staff and young people understand. The Statement of Purpose contains insufficient detail about staff members' relevant experience. The guide for young people requires attention because it is out of date in a number of aspects, such as the name and current telephone number of the national regulator and information about the Children's Rights Director. Staff understand the implications of diversity for equality, and recognise the importance of access to services as well as appreciation of cultural differences.

The home has adequate staff and internal resources. The home is well maintained so young people enjoy a clean, tidy and welcoming environment.

The home notifies other agencies appropriately about significant events. The home has cultivated good relationships with other agencies. However, the lack of some placement plans, and delays in some actions allocated to social workers, indicates that the home is sometimes insufficiently robust within those relationships.

The home keeps records about young people securely. The records are clear and appropriately ordered. Staff make daily records about young people's behaviour and events during the day. Each young person's progress and any emerging issues are discussed and recorded at monthly staff meetings. In addition, the home's family satisfaction surveys provide periodic comment about how carers think their young person is getting on in the home. This means that these views and observations are available and contribute to understanding young people's lives. However, there is not

a systematic and clearly expressed link between the needs and targets in young people's placement plans and the observations and records being collected. This means the home limits its ability to demonstrate the impact it has had on each of those needs and targets.

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.