

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Anna Williams
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to three young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. Education in line with the national curriculum is available at an external school maintained by the home. The home is run by a partnership company.

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 within this home make exceptional progress. They are very positive about the care they receive. Young people engage with the local community and make significant educational progress. Relationships between young people and care staff are a strength of the service. Care planning documents detail clearly the individual and diverse needs of young people. They are involved in their creation and review. Positive feedback has been received from a placing social worker about the major progress one young person has made. Specific praise was made regarding the decrease in risk-taking behaviours by the young person and their improved emotional self-worth.

Shortfalls within the home relate to management oversight of specific areas around the quality of care. Medication administration systems are not safe and effective. Young people's pocket money records are inaccurate and unclear. Significant events relating to the safety of young people are actioned appropriately. However, notification to Ofsted of these incidents is not consistently timely. Arrangements to deputise for the Registered Manager when she is absent are not clear. Some sanctions imposed involve food; this is not in line with regulatory requirements.

Overall, the Registered Manager is not fully aware of some significant weaknesses within the home. Internal monitoring has not been wholly effective at identifying key areas for action highlighted during this 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
17 (2001)	ensure no punishment involves the consumption or deprivation of food or drink (Regulation 17 (2) (b))	31/12/2013
21 (2001)	ensure suitable arrangements for the recording, handling, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of any medicines received into the children's home (Regulation 21 (1))	31/12/2013
28 (2001)	ensure accurate records are kept of the dates on which any monies or valuables are deposited by or on behalf of a child for safekeeping, and the dates on which any money is withdrawn, and any valuables are returned (Regulation 28 (1) (a, b and c))	31/12/2013
30 (2001)	ensure if, in relation to a children's home, any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 5 takes place, the registered person shall without delay notify the persons indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of the table (Regulation 30 (1))	31/12/2013
34 (2001)	ensure the system to review the quality of care is effective at auditing and maintaining accurate records of medication administration and children's monies. (Regulation 34 (1) (a and b))	31/12/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure clear arrangements are in place to ensure appropriate management of the home when the Registered Manager is absent. (NMS 21.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Young people benefit from a strong key working system within the home. They engage consistently with key working sessions which focus on a wide variety of topics. Young people make excellent progress in building confidence through these regular meetings. Young people themselves reflect that since living in the home they have become more assertive. Some young people attend regularly and share their views at a 'child in care council' arranged through their local authority. This demonstrates positive self-belief and confidence to be part of such a forum.

Contact arrangements are actively promoted and excellently facilitated by staff. Some young people have successfully commenced contact with extended family members after a number of years apart. Distance is not a barrier to young people having positive contact time with siblings and family members because staff intricately plan each visit to ensure it is successful. This supports young people keeping in contact with people who are significant in their life.

Young people all engage in the therapeutic approach the home offers. They attend individual therapy sessions and participate well. This benefits their emotional well-being. Sessions take place between young people and the local outreach sexual health services on a regular basis. This ensures young people are equipped with knowledge and advice about sexual health matters. Some young people say that prior to living in this home they smoked, misused drugs and alcohol, but they no longer engage in these behaviours. Young people who previously absconded and placed themselves at significant risk in the community for long periods, no longer show this behaviour. This is exceptional progress. Some young people are now fully up to date with routine vaccinations, which benefits their physical health now and in their future.

All the young people follow a full-time educational timetable and have full attendance at school. All the young people are making outstanding progress educationally, considering their individual starting points.

Young people take part in a wide variety of community based activities. Some of these include street dance club, cadets, teen gym and roller disco. Some young people successfully took part in holidays with staff at locations across the country. This provides opportunity to travel, meet new friends and experience new activities. Young people continue with hobbies and interests within the home. Some young people have their own workshop space which they use daily to build and construct small items with appropriate staff supervision. This provides young people with encouragement to continue and extend practical skills and interests they enjoy.

All young people engage in independence goals as appropriate to their age and understanding. Regular household tasks are shared such as kitchen and laundry tasks. This supports young people as they move towards adulthood. Some young people have used their cooking skills to help others through charity cake sales. This demonstrates awareness of wanting to help others and a positive use of individual young people's skills. All the young people have taken part in focused fund raising for those less fortunate. This is celebrated within the home and is a very positive achievement.

Quality of care

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

Relationships between young people and care staff are extremely positive. Daily meetings offer an opportunity for young people to meet as a group and reflect and

plan together. Through these meetings, young people choose menu options and plan activities and house events. Young people know how to complain. Since the last inspection, there has been one complaint from a young person which was fully investigated and resolved. The Registered Manager has shown learning and reflection from this complaint. These consultation systems demonstrate to young people that their wishes and feelings are valued and responded to.

Issues relating to diversity are well-celebrated. Individual identity boards celebrate young people's backgrounds. These visual displays, alongside regular themed international events, stimulate constructive discussion around differences and learning about other cultures. Young people's unique and individual needs are well-known by staff. Placement plans are detailed and involve the views and feelings of the young people. Young people are well-supported to attend and successfully take part in review meetings. This ensures young people are suitably involved the review of their own care.

Since the last inspection, the home now uses a monitored dosage system of medication administration. Stock checks during the inspection of one prescribed medication, which cannot be placed in a blistered administration pack, showed a discrepancy between administration records and the numbers of tablets remaining. Further stock checks of homely remedies showed further discrepancies and unaccounted for tablets. Internal stock checks do take place on a regular basis. However, since April 2013 the actual numbers of tablets and medication in stock has not been recorded. Consequently, without a clear and accurate audit trail, it is difficult to calculate when discrepancies first occurred. Detailed information as to why homely remedies are given to young people is not captured within individual medical administration records. This is not a safe and effective system of medication administration. The medication policy for the home was due to be reviewed in June 2013, but this has not been completed. Therefore, this policy does not reflect the new system of medication administration within the home, and staff guidance is now not wholly relevant.

Staff enthusiastically encourage young people to follow the activity planner system. Some young people have visual timetables to assist their planning for each day. This is effective at reducing anxiety. Young people take part in a variety of in-house activities such as arts and crafts, model making and board games. Within the local community, young people join in local celebrations and commemorations, such as the remembrance parade. Staff work together effectively with the school setting. Young people complete homework with staff on a daily basis. This results in full attendance and significant academic achievement and progress.

Young people live in a home which is well-maintained and homely. It is located within walking distance of local shops and facilities. This supports young people to positively engage with the local community. A games room is currently being created at the request of young people. The house and garden areas offer young people ample space to relax, study and follow individual hobbies. Artwork completed by the young people is displayed through the house. Young people reflect that they are proud to see their art creations on the walls. This celebrates individual talents and

creates a warm and vibrant environment.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people speak positively about their time in the home. While some young people have identified bullying behaviours within the school setting, this has been addressed by staff effectively working together with school and young people in the home.

Staff successfully implement a therapeutic approach to behaviour management. This actively involves the young people in the creation and review of reward charts, which they fully engage with. Through this approach, and effectively using de-escalation techniques, there have been only four physical interventions since the last inspection. The use of sanctions is higher, with 37 imposed since February 2013. While the majority of sanctions are appropriate, there are some sanctions set which involve withholding sweet monies, and stopping takeaway treats. These are considered by the Registered Manager as treats, but still involve consumables. Two sanctions involved a 'snack ban', one for three days and one with no time limit set. This is inappropriate and is not in line with the regulations.

Young people are safeguarded by the development and use of excellent recruitment procedures. All references and past employment are thoroughly checked and the human resources manager evidences all actions on the files. Young people are protected from being cared for by people who may pose a risk to them.

Since the last inspection, there have been two incidents of young people reported as missing. Appropriate actions were taken to safeguard the young people. Staff ensure that debriefs take place with young people and provide a structured opportunity to reflect and learn from each missing episode. Allegations or suspicions of harm are appropriately shared with external safeguarding professionals to ensure the safety of young people.

The home is physically safe and hazard free. Good health and safety routines and checks ensure equipment is safe and servicing takes place on a regular basis. This ensures the safety of all who live in and visit the home. Feedback is actively sought from young people on any maintenance matters they may have identified themselves. Fire safety instructions are discussed weekly during young people's meetings. This ensures all young people are verbally refreshed on emergency procedures, as well practical escape drills which also occur regularly.

Leadership and management

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

The home has a permanent Registered Manager in post. She is working towards achieving the level 5 diploma management qualification. This will extend her skills

and knowledge around leadership and management. The home has a Statement of Purpose which suitably describes the aims and objectives of the home. A children's guide is presented in a child-friendly format and outlines clearly what living in the home will be like for a child. This ensures young people, parents and placing authorities are all clear about the aims and ethos of the home.

Staff are well-supported by the Registered Manager. They receive regular supervision which is child focused and clearly recorded. Annual appraisals of staff include the views and feedback from young people within the home on staff performance. This demonstrates to young people that their views about staff are valued and listened to. Staff training needs are identified and fully met. Courses undertaken recently include attachment theory, food hygiene, and child sexual exploitation awareness. A previous requirement to ensure there is a suitably qualified first aider on every shift has been met. This ensures young people are cared for by staff with relevant safe caring skills.

Significant events relating to the safety of young people are actioned appropriately by the Registered Manager. However, while notification to other external parties is prompt, Ofsted has not been notified within 24 hours of significant incidents. Consequently, the regulator is not kept up-to-date on actions taken by the home to safeguard young people. Some significant events have occurred when the Registered Manager has been absent. The home has a senior member of staff who has responsibility for the day-to-day running when the Registered Manager is not present. However, the job description for this senior staff does not adequately describe the specific responsibilities of what deputising means, including managing significant events and safeguarding children when the Registered Manager is away. Without clear arrangements in place, there is potential for key actions to be missed by the overseeing senior.

Team development plans are reviewed every six weeks. The Registered Manager has recently implemented a longer term annual goal plan for the home. This includes the creation of a games room within the house grounds. This is progressing well and will offer young people further activities and separate space to relax within their home.

Records kept by the home clearly capture the excellent progress that young people make. These documents are stored securely. Staff actively keep mementos and photos of the young people's time in the house. Young people are encouraged to add personal statements to their files, which they do. This positively involves young people in capturing their life at the home. However, young people's pocket money records are not accurate and the recording of how young people's money has been spent is not clear. Internal audit systems have not identified discrepancies within the records. This does not demonstrate that the home is keeping children's valuables safely.

External monitoring visits occur on a monthly basis and fully involve young people. Quarterly internal management monitoring reports produced by the Registered Manager are detailed and include feedback from young people, their families and linked professionals. However, these internal reports have not been fully effective at identifying weaknesses within the home which have been highlighted during this

inspection. For example, the shortfalls within the medication administration system and discrepancies in children's pocket money records. Consequently, the Registered Manager does not demonstrate a full understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home.

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.