

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Robert Curr
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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 home is registered to accommodate up to two young people of either sex from 10 to 17-years-old. The home provides care for young people who may need support with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people receive a good level of care and some young people make good progress throughout their placement. Relationships between staff and young people are not always positive. The staff team are suitably qualified and competent in their work. They understand their role and provide good outcomes for young people. Young people feel safe and say staff treat them fairly, support and listen to them. They say staff look after them very well and consider this is one of the best places they have lived in.

Staff actively promote young people's education and their access to health services. In particular, staff support young people's realistic aspirations for employment and further education. Effective communication between the home and other professional agencies benefits young people. Professionals confirm staff make good contact and keep them informed of any issues relating to matters affecting young people.

Currently the home is not effectively managed because monitoring processes do not identify current shortfalls so improvements can be made. The regular use of bank staff has the potential to disrupt the experiences of the young people. There is no evidence that these breaches of regulation have impacted adversely on the care given to young people. The breaches result in a judgement of satisfactory for leadership and management.

Areas for improvementStatutory 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
31 (2001)	ensure that the home is well maintained and decorated, in particular, the kitchen area (Regulation 31)	31/01/2012
33 (2001)	ensure that when the visit to the home has been made in accordance with Regulation 33, a copy of the report is supplied	30/09/2011

	to the home in a timely fashion (Regulation 33 (5)(b))	
34 (2001)	ensure the system for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 take place; ensure the established system improves the quality of care provided; ensure the system provides for consultation with children, their parents and placing authorities. (Regulation 34(1) and (3))	30/09/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure that if a child is missing from home and their whereabouts is not known (i.e. the child is missing), the home's procedures are compatible with and have regard to the Runaway and Missing from Home and Care protocols and procedures maintained and managed by the police or by the local authority for the area in which the home is located (NMS 5.6)
- ensure all existing staff have attained a minimum level 3 qualification (NMS 18.5)
- ensure the home has a written development plan, reviewed annually, specifically to help develop the management and operation of the home (NMS 15.2)
- ensure every effort is made to achieve continuity of staffing. (NMS 17.8)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people living in the home benefit from close levels of support and guidance from the care staff team. Staff aim to engage positively with them, encouraging them to take responsibility for their actions and behaviours. Young people receive praise and rewards for positive behaviours rather than staff using punitive methods to manage their challenging behaviours. Although not all young people are engaging with staff they are helped to find positive ways of managing their emotions.

Young people are encouraged to eat a healthy diet and receive staff support in planning a nutritious weekly menu. Young people are supported to join in activities outside of the home, where they can socialise with other young people. Young people are encouraged to participate in activities which promote their physical well-being. When appropriate, young people are supported to participate in group activities such as having gym membership and horse riding sessions. These actions have a positive effect in increasing young people's confidence and self-esteem.

The health of young people is positively promoted. Young people have their own individual health plan in place. They are protected by safe practices within the home

which ensure they receive the health care they need in order to promote their well-being. Young people are appropriately registered and receive the health services available to them in the community. Staff then encourage the young people to access those services they need to meet their identified individual needs. Specialist advice is sought when necessary to ensure staff have the skills to address identified medical problems.

Young people feel they are consulted and listened to. Regular residents' meetings provide a venue where issues about the running of the home can be discussed, and individual sessions enable young people to talk in private about anything that may be worrying them.

Young people have contact with family and friends in line with their local authority care plan. Staff support these visits and ensure that any difficulties that arise are shared with placing social workers so that young people can maintain positive relationships with key people in their lives.

Young people are encouraged to develop their educational potential. For instance young people not in full time education are supported by an education plan involving the organisations education services. The aim of this placement is to help them learn and develop new skills in an environment where they feel at ease. One young person said 'I love my placement here'.

Quality of care

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

Young people mostly enjoy and report positive relationships with a caring staff team. Some attempts have been made to recognise and address issues where young people may seek to regularly negatively target some members of the staff team. Staff are increasingly tuned into moods and triggers as identified in the 'warning signs' within the placement package. Staff strive to offer appropriate support and protection therefore successfully de-escalating some situations or avoiding prolonged incidents. The use of rewards and sanctions is not fully effective even though these are understood and agreed by young people. On some occasions young people's intentions and behaviours can quickly spiral out of control. There appears no immediate trigger. In these situations staff are unable to divert negative behaviours and police involvement has been required. This has resulted in a number of incidences which interrupt daily life, cause frequent damage and, sometimes, confrontations with staff. Therefore young people are not always afforded the boundaries and containment they need. Where such patterns continue behaviour management plans are frequently reviewed and detailed reviews of the incident are used to aid the staff team in devising alternate strategies. For one young person this has resulted in an organised programme of daily activities being put in place.

Placement packages outline individual needs, and staff appropriately demonstrate an understanding of young people's diverse needs. Staff are fully conversant with young people's needs. Young people's cultural and religious needs are identified and met.

There is some particularly task-focused work being undertaken to promote positive outcomes for young people. The staff work hard to reduce known risks that young people present. Staff are helping young people understand how some of their behaviours have an impact on safeguarding events that have occurred in the home.

Young people are able to express their views, wishes and feelings to staff. Young people feel most staff listen to them. Resident meetings enable young people to request items, make suggestions and grumble, if needed. A member of staff has a lead responsibility for ensuring young people are suitably informed about the complaints procedure as part of their admission process. Any complaint made by a young person is taken seriously and is promptly investigated and documented. The recorded outcome of such investigations indicates whether young people are happy with the actions that have been taken.

The home provides a physical environment that is suited to meeting the aims and objectives of the service. The facilities are generally well maintained and reflect a family type environment as much as possible. The kitchen area is showing signs of wear and young people say that it is not a pleasant environment. A number cabinet doors and drawers are damaged. All young people have their own rooms. Rooms are suitably furnished and young people are encouraged to personalise them. The garden provides an outdoor area where young people can enjoy the more boisterous games. One young person enjoys pitching their tent in the garden. There is access to a range of local facilities in a nearby city and local town.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people's safety is a priority and all staff work consistently to promote young people's safety and well-being. Young people confirm that they feel safe and indicate that 'there is always someone on duty you can speak to if you are unhappy or worried about something'. There is detailed guidance and reporting procedures are in place to support staff in protecting young people. Comprehensive risk assessments ensure that all staff are aware of the risks young people present to themselves and others. These are regularly reviewed by the manager and the staff team to ensure they remain effective in helping to protect the young people they are caring for. There are systems in place to notify the relevant agencies of significant events to allow for the sharing of important safeguarding information.

The staff team work hard to develop and sustain positive relationships with young people. They use a range of agreed incentives to encourage and promote socially acceptable behaviours. All staff are trained in the appropriate use of physical intervention. They use their skills in de-escalation to try to respond to negative behaviours shown by young people. A social worker commented that 'no matter how hard the staff work, one young person's behaviour is getting worse not better'. Documentation used to record incidents of physical intervention has recently been revised by the company. This is to ensure that everybody involved in, or observing, an incident which results in the physical management of a young person has the

opportunity to reflect on how situations might be managed differently in the future. Records indicate physical intervention is only ever used as the last resort, in order to promote the safety and well-being of young people and others.

Young people say that the use of sanctions are mostly fair and confirm that they receive incentive awards for good behaviour. There is agreed guidance for staff to follow where sanctions are seen to be appropriate. Documentation has recently been introduced which encourages both staff and young people to reflect back on the effectiveness of sanctions given. Records indicate that the manager considers whether less punitive interventions may be effectively implemented in future responses to incidents. A social worker commented 'I am always advised of any incident that occurs, the staff team are excellent at communicating with me and advising me of any issues which impact on the young person's care.' This high level of sharing information ensures that young people receive the support required to encourage them to take responsibility for their own safety.

Young people's care plans and risk assessments take account of a young person's potential to go missing and their vulnerability should they do so. However, the manager is yet to establish links with the local police authority to ensure that the home's policy reflects locally agreed protocols.

Positive steps are taken to keep young people, staff and visitors safe from fire hazards. Risk assessments are in place for all aspects of safety in the premises and grounds, including fire, individual young people's behaviours and activities. Young people participate regularly in fire drills and understand the evacuation procedures. All outdoor activities are fully risk assessed. These practices ensure that young people's physical safety is always the priority.

Young people are protected by good recruitment practices. Robust checks are completed on prospective staff members to ensure they are suitable to work with young people. Visitors to the home are supervised by the staff team to ensure that all young people are kept safe when visitors are present.

Leadership and management

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

Since the previous inspection the Registered Manager has been promoted and the organisation awaits the return of a staff member to become the manager. The home is currently under the guidance of the deputy manager who has suitable experience to manage the home. There have been significant changes in the staff team. Regular external monitoring of the home has not been strong during this unsettled time. No one has completed the monitoring of the service that is the responsibility of the manager. The staff could not find the Regulation 33 report that is used by the organisation to audit and measure the quality of care that is being offered to young people. This is not ensuring that the home's strengths and weakness are being assessed. The process of formulating a development plan which indicates short, medium and long-term goals for the home has begun in earnest but is not yet

complete.

Young people benefit from a committed and energetic permanent staff team who are able to see the positive qualities in them despite the very challenging behaviours they may present. However, records indicate that young people do not always benefit from being cared for by a well established staff team. The home is sometimes staffed by new or inexperienced staff. Although these staff work alongside a more experienced worker, this does not ensure a consistent approach in the support and care that is offered to young people with complex needs. Some of the staff hold appropriate childcare qualifications, others are undertaking training and some have yet to be enrolled on training. Staff receive regular supervision and attend team meetings that promote team building and ensure all staff are equipped with the skills and competences to work effectively with young people.

The Statement of Purpose for this service reflects the aims and objectives of the home and the services and facilities it provides.

The recommendation from the previous inspection has not been fully addressed. Although progress has been made in relation to staff training, not all staff are undertaking a level 3 qualification.

All significant events are reported to the appropriate authorities in accordance with the home's statutory responsibilities.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.