

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Elaine Cray
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is part of a large private children's care organisation and is registered to accommodate three young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home offers short, long-term and emergency placements. The home has a school on site, and this is registered with the Department for Education.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service 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 progress well at this home because they receive personalised and well planned care. There are care planning frameworks to support young people's behaviour, health, education, social and safeguarding needs. Key strengths of this service are the focus on building positive relationships between young people and staff and positively engaging young people in education. Young people are doing well in education and young people have a confident focus on achieving well and reaching their potential. They grow in maturity and develop skills to prepare for life as a young adult in society. Young people are proud of their achievements, they grow in confidence and develop positive identities. They want to do well at school, have opportunities to attend further education, get a job and live independently. The service provides an environment where individual young people can express their individuality. Young people live in a home where equality and diversity is promoted and celebrated.

Safeguarding is promoted and facilitated. Young people develop a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and improve behaviour. The safety and welfare needs of young people are significantly improved.

The management and staff team have experienced a significant period of change. There is a clear dedication to developing a cohesive staff team and every effort has been made to maintain a stable and secure home for young people. There are clear external monitoring processes for the running of the home. The manager and line manager embrace and value the need for a clear focus on quality assurance, particularly in terms of consultation with young people. The service's development

plan is adjusted to address shortfalls.

There are eight statutory requirements and nine recommendations set as a result of this inspection. Shortfalls are identified in the management of the home, record keeping, care planning, consultation with young people and the monitoring of placement plans and other records.

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
11 (2001)	ensure that the children's home is conducted so as to promote and make proper provision for the welfare of children and in a manner which respects the dignity and has due regard to the sex and racial origin of children accommodated there (Regulation 11)	01/06/2012
28 (2001)	ensure the home's records are accurate and relate to the named child (Regulation 28.1)	01/06/2012
28 (2001)	ensure information in respect of each child includes details of all matters as required in Schedule 3 (Regulation 28.1 (a))	01/06/2012
28 (2001)	ensure each written entry in records as required in Schedule 3 is signed and dated by the author (Regulation 28.1 (c))	01/06/2012
29 (2001)	maintain records as specified in Schedule 4 and ensure that they are kept up to date. This is with particular regard to a copy of the staff duty roster of persons working at the children's home, and a record of the actual rosters worked. (Regulation 29.1 Schedule 4.11)	01/06/2012
34 (2001)	maintain a system for monitoring the matters as set out in Schedule 6 and ensure this system improves the quality of care provided in the home (Regulation 34.1)	01/06/2012
34 (2001)	ensure the system for monitoring the matters as set out in Schedule 6 and improving the quality of care provided provide includes consultation with children accommodated in the home, their parents and placing authorities (Regulation 34.3)	01/06/2012
33 (2001)	ensure the Regulation 33 visitor carries out interviews, with their consent and in private, with the children accommodated at the home. (Regulation 33.4 (a))	01/06/2012

Recommendations

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

- continue to develop processes to ensure the wishes, feelings and views of children and those significant to them are taken into account in monitoring staff and in developing the home (NMS 1.7)
- ensure the home implements a proportionate approach to any risk assessment (NMS 4.5)
- ensure the children's home only provides admission to children whose assessed needs they can reasonably expect to meet (NMS 11.2)
- ensure the Registered Manager of the home has business and management skills to manage the work efficiently and effectively (NMS 14.1)
- ensure the Registered Manager exercises effective leadership of the home's staff and operation, such that the home is organised, managed and staffed in a manner that delivers sound, good quality care that meets the individual needs of each child at the home (NMS 14.5)
- ensure the Registered Manager regularly monitors, in line with regulations, all records kept by the home to ensure compliance with the home's policies, to identify any concerns about specific incidents and to identify patterns and trends. Immediate action is taken to address any issues raised by this monitoring (NMS 21.2)
- ensure entries in records are legible, clearly expressed, non-stigmatising and distinguish as far as possible between fact, opinion and third party information (NMS 22.4)
- ensure information about the child is recorded clearly and in a way which will be helpful to the child when they access their files now or in the future. Children are actively encouraged to read their files, other than confidential or third party information and to correct errors and add personal statements (NMS 22.5)
- ensure children understand, within their level of understanding, the purpose and content of their plan and the reasoning behind any decisions about their care. (NMS 25.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are making good progress at this home. They say they have developed in maturity and have a greater understanding of their background, reasons for coming to live at the home and some of their risk-taking behaviours. Young people feel good about themselves because they have improved behaviour, including not going missing from care, finding better ways to stay safe and developing clarity regarding family circumstances.

Young people have good attendance at school and they are proud of their

achievements. Some young people achieve well in mainstream school and in line with their peers. Young people acknowledge that attending the school at the home has helped them attend more often and enjoy education. All young people are currently looking at applying to college to extend their education in terms of their preferred employment.

Young people have good opportunities to explore opportunities and their potential. They learn and grow in maturity because they are supported to prepare for independent living and receive good practical guidance. Young people are very confident and proud of their abilities to budget, cook and attend appointments and interviews. Young people are also supported to explore how they see themselves and relate to others. Young people positively look forward to maturing into valuable young adults in society.

Young people enjoy good health. They have a good awareness of their own health needs and take positive responsibility for their own healthcare and appointments. They understand how lifestyle choices can impact on their health, including balanced eating, exercise, understanding sexual health and using medication. Young people also understand how to access a variety of health agencies that will support their medical needs and give advice about lifestyle choices.

Young people are more confident and have improved emotional resilience because they are given opportunities to make sense of their backgrounds, experiences and their behaviours. They are able to express themselves in terms of sexuality, connections to their local community and their cultural and religious backgrounds.

Young people value the caring and stable environment they live in. They grow in maturity because they are treated with respect and enjoy meaningful relationships with staff. Young people value staff and the importance for them to make time to talk about young people's interests, concerns, behaviour, family contact and join in with activities. However young people feel some of these positive opportunities are currently compromised. They wish staff would spend less time in the office and more time with them to fully listen to their views. The girls would also like to have a female key worker and for more staff to participate in activities.

Young people understand and participate in the running of the house, but do not always feel they have a fair share in how decisions are made. They are able to attend house meetings where they discuss what has been happening and plan for the future. However young people feel rules and expectations are unfairly implemented by staff, for example, rewards and sanctions for school attendance and the availability of funding for hairdressing appointments.

Quality of care

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

Young people's care and support is managed with a clear framework for care, education and behaviour management. Care plans are comprehensive and usefully

interlink with risk management strategies and behaviour management plans. On the whole, young people receive good support. The plans guide staff with strategies to support young people in the daily routines in the home. However, in some instances, relevant and important information has not been adequately addressed in order to provide a comprehensive assessment of need. These shortfalls and inaccuracies impact on the relevance and meaning of the care and risk strategies identified for some young people. While the care planning framework gives scope to consultancy with young people, not all young people are aware of their placement plans. Some young people have signed risk assessment material that is not accurate and is not relevant to their care.

Young people's education is effectively supported with individual plans and strategies both in mainstream and the service's school. Young people's attendance and achievement at school is supported with good working relationships between the carers and education staff. Young people learn and develop because they are supported with individual and meaningful education plans. The routines in the house including bedtimes, getting up and staffing levels are arranged in order to promote access to education. Staffing levels are arranged to ensure young people are supported in school and can access activities.

Young people have a strong sense of personal identity and individuality. Staff have a good knowledge about the social, cultural and religious backgrounds of young people. Young people can express themselves, explore their backgrounds and develop positive identities. However, this proactive approach to promoting diversity has been compromised. Poor assessment of the potential impact of discriminatory behaviour has led to poor placement matching and admission of young people to the home.

Young people live in a structured and nurturing environment. There is a strong ethos and commitment to developing and maintaining meaningful relationships with young people. Young people are encouraged to show support and care for each other. This strong focus on relationship building and group identity positively impacts on young people's ability to form and maintain relationships. However this focus has been compromised in recent months due to some staff changes. Young people feel less confident about the availability of staff.

There are formal processes in place for young people to express their views, wishes and feelings. There are house meetings to discuss the running of the home. Mealtimes are useful and interactive times. Staff and young people sit down for their meal and chat about how the day is going and plan the rest of the day. Regular key working time is in place for young people to discuss their care and progress. While young people value their time with staff, they do not always feel their point of view is listened to and acknowledged. Young people know how to make a complaint.

Young people's physical and emotional health is promoted and monitored. Clear assessment of health and medical needs are identified and staff liaise well with appropriate health and advice agencies. There are effective procedures for the safe administration of medication. Young people are encouraged to understand and take

responsibility for their own health needs. Healthy eating and regular exercise are promoted. Staff and young people are involved in planning well-balanced menus which take into account personal preferences and cultural needs.

Young people live in a well maintained home, designed to meet their needs. They enjoy the privacy of their own rooms; they can choose the colour of décor and express their individuality with personal items. The house is homely with photos, pictures and ornaments.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people live in a safe and stable environment. They are protected by an effective and robust recruitment process that includes comprehensive checks on all staff. All staff receive training on safeguarding children. They are aware their own roles and responsibilities and those of other agencies involved in keeping young people safe.

The home has clear practices and protocols with the local police to support effective action when children go missing. Staff are aware of the factors that may trigger young people going missing and take action to minimise the risk. The incidences of children missing from the home are minimised and very infrequent.

There have been significant improvements in the safeguarding outcomes for young people, including not going missing and making more positive social relationships. Attention to the supervision of children and young people is detailed and consistent. Children and young people are safer because they are actively discouraged from accessing risk-taking activities and associations. Their ability to manage their own safety is improved as they are consistently reminded and enabled to make positive choices and lead safer lifestyles. Young people say they feel safe and value the significant improvements in their behaviour. They say they have developed a much greater awareness of how to keep themselves safe, particularly in their own local communities.

Young people are motivated by and value the praise and rewards they receive for good behaviour and achievement. They understand and accept the rules and the incentives in place to support their behaviour. Records and comments from young people show they are clear about what behaviour is unacceptable and that sanctions for when things do not go so well are fair. However young people perceive these are not consistently applied across the group of young people living at the home.

Young people are positive about how bullying is dealt with, saying they are encouraged to treat each other with respect. The potential for bullying is clearly risk assessed. Staff present a clear commitment to challenging and managing any behaviours that may intimidate and oppress individuals living and working in the home. While there are clear processes to assess and identify the particular vulnerabilities relating to the diverse needs of children and young people, these have

not been consistently implemented. Poor assessments of risk-taking behaviour and discriminatory attitudes have negatively impacted on young people. Lack of attention to information compromises full risk management, appropriate placement matching and the safety of young people in the home.

Leadership and management

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

The effectiveness of the management of this service is compromised by poor implementation and review of established policies and procedures. Staffing levels are variable due to high levels of sickness and transfer of staff to from other children's homes within the company. There is also a lack of confidence in the leadership style of the manager. There are significant shortfalls in maintaining accurate, consistent and accountable records in the home.

Requirements from the previous inspection have been addressed. However new and related weaknesses have emerged. Several statutory requirements and recommendation are set as a result of this inspection.

At the last inspection in February 2012 there had been several changes in staff and an exchange of managers. The current manager is experienced and was registered at another home owned by the company. There is an ongoing application to register the current manager for this service. Staffing arrangements are improved and now address the gender balance in the home. Additional improvements include the recent promotion of three staff to senior care workers. However there are high levels of sickness and staff morale is poor. Young people are concerned about the quality of relationships and the amount of time staff spend with them. These difficulties clearly impact on young people. The young people express concern about the welfare of the staff in terms of sickness, fatigue and how much the staff enjoy coming to work.

The manager and staff strive to continue to offer a good level of care to young people. The staff acknowledge the manager's commitment but they are concerned about how long hours, high levels of sickness and delegated responsibilities negatively impact on their effectiveness. Staff are also unsure as to how their professional concerns and personal circumstances are heard and addressed by the management. Staff supervision records indicate a high level of discussion on staffing arrangements and discipline. These discussions significantly outweigh the content about work with young people and staff's professional development.

Positively, and despite staffing difficulties, young people are looked after and cared for in a nurturing environment. There is a strong team-work emphasis and a key strength is building engaging and meaningful relationships with young people. Young people are looked after by experienced and competent staff who have a varied training programme.

The home is well maintained and provides a homely and comfortable environment for young people. They live in safe environment because health and safety is

effectively managed. Records show regular servicing and checks of the environment and safety procedures in the home. Young people know what to do if there is a fire.

Young people's care and outcomes are monitored on a monthly basis by an independent person. Early reports identified some administrative shortfalls. More recent reports acknowledge improvements in the home, including increased staffing levels, consistent use of agency staff and recruitment to the home. The independent visitor's process is comprehensive and includes consultation with young people and staff. However young people do not significantly identify with the visitor. This may impact on young people's contribution and how reports reflect significant details about their views.

Leaders and managers acknowledge the strengths and weaknesses of this service. A development plan is in place, this includes structured line management support and a management mentoring process. The manager acknowledges difficulties in staffing and associates these with the staff changes back in February 2012. The manager also states the home is improving. However, on closer scrutiny, the manager is unable to identify specific strategies for how this being managed. Discussions and findings in this inspection, including current records in the home, show a significant level of dissatisfaction with the current management of the service.

Discussion with the manager about outcomes for young people and frameworks for their care do not stand up to scrutiny when records are checked. Records are not accurate, clear and therefore do not contribute to an understanding of the child's life. Some updated information in care plans is not dated and therefore lacks meaning and clarity. Records relating to the actual and continuously changing staffing arrangements in the home are unclear, difficult to decipher and include arrangements for other homes owned by the provider. Essential information as required in young people's files is not complete. The manager's monthly checks have not picked up and addressed these matters.

Discussion with the line manager for the home demonstrates a clear awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the service. The home's development plan is to be adjusted to meet the manager's and provider's commitment to establishing a sound and transparent approach to establishing effective organisation in the home, showing an adequate capacity to bring about improvements.

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.