

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	27/11/2014
Inspector	Matthew Hedges
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is registered to provide care and accommodation for two young people of either gender with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home is operated by the local authority.

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**.

Overall, young people talk positively about staff and the care that they receive. Young people say that they generally feel safe. Staff show a good awareness of safeguarding practices which further enhances this.

A number of shortfalls have been identified at this inspection. These relate to the support offered to young people in specific areas, hazards, recruitment, training, and some aspects of record keeping. In addition, there are shortfalls in recording of missing from home events, staff are left in sole charge of the home during their probation, and young people's views are not always evident in their records. The impact of these shortfalls is reduced by the relationships between staff and young people, the involvement of other agencies, and other processes that are in place.

The Registered Manager understands the home's strengths and weaknesses and has an up to date development plan in place.

The home provides an adequate quality of care underpinned by individualised plans for each young person. Young people's outcomes improve in relation to key areas of their life. This includes their ability to develop positive relationships. Young people's engagement in education also improves and this supports increased attainment and self-esteem.

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 make proper provision for the support of children accommodated there (Regulation 11 (1) (b))	02/01/2015
21 (2001)	ensure that any medicine which is prescribed for a child is administered as prescribed, specifically that prescription labels are updated to show the most current medical advice (Regulation 21 (2) (b))	02/01/2015
23 (2001)	ensure that all parts of the home to which children have access are so far as reasonably practicable free from hazards to their health or safety (Regulation 23 (a))	02/01/2015
26 (2001)	ensure that a person shall not work at the children's home unless that person is fit to work at a children's home (Regulation 26 (1) (a))	02/01/2015
27 (2001)	ensure that all persons employed receive appropriate training (Regulation 27 (4) (a))	02/01/2015
29 (2001)	maintain in the children's home the records specified in Schedule 4 and ensure that they are kept up to date (Regulation 29 (1))	02/01/2015

Recommendations

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

- ensure that written records kept by the home when a child goes missing detail action taken by staff, the circumstances of the child's return, any reasons given by the child for running away from the home, and any action taken in the light of those reasons. This information is shared with the responsible authority and where appropriate, their parents (NMS 5.10)
- ensure that staff members who are placed in charge of the home and other staff at particular times (e.g. as leaders of staff shifts) have substantial relevant experience of working in the home and have successfully completed their induction and probationary periods (NMS 17.5)
- ensure that 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)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **adequate**.

Outcomes for young people are mixed.

Young people make adequate progress to develop a positive self-view. Young people have gained confidence because of this. One young person's social worker stated that the young person was, 'the happiest he had ever seen him'. One young person talked about feeling comfortable to, 'be myself'. This was supported by an education provider who commented that the young person was, 'always smiling'.

Some young people previously experienced significant problems making and sustaining relationships with adults. This has improved since living at the home. This helps young people to become more resilient. In addition, young people are knowledgeable about their background and have a growing sense of their own identity. This is enhanced by staying in touch with friends and where possible, some family members. This ensures that young people continue to develop an understanding of their identity and stay in touch with the people who are important to them.

Young people generally enjoy good physical health. Young people have reduced their drug and alcohol use, which further improves their health.

Some young people have significant issues in relation to their emotional and psychological health. This causes some young people to display significant risk taking behaviours at times. Overall, this is slowly improving and young people are engaging in therapeutic support. This ensures that young people are developing the skills and support networks needed to support them as they enter adulthood.

Young people are supported to share their views and wishes and are confident enough to do this. This helps young people to develop self-confidence and take more control over important aspects of their life.

Though some young people attend full time college courses other young people have part-time programmes in place. This is a significant improvement for all young people, most of whom were not actively engaging in education prior to living at the home. This helps young people to achieve more. In addition to improving academic skills, this also helps young people to develop increased self-confidence. One young person talked about winning a recent music show where they played their guitar. They were rightly proud of this. Some young people have also been able to make friends with people of the same age and attend local clubs and activities after school. This is a significant improvement for some young people who have previously found themselves isolated.

Young people's independence skills improve. One young person talked happily about being able to cook dinner for everyone in the home. They have also planted tomato

and strawberry plants in the garden. In addition, young people acquire skills managing their own money and using public transport. One young person stated they can, 'look after themselves now'. This helps to prepare young people for adult life.

Quality of care

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

Young people are generally positive about their relationships with staff and are comfortable with them. One young person said, 'people have a laugh here'. Relationships between staff and young people are further developed through a range of positive leisure activities. The relationships between young people living in the home can be strained at times. Staff manage this well and help young people to reflect on their impact on other people. For some young people this has helped them to develop greater empathy and understanding of their own behaviour. This has helped their relationships with each other to improve.

Young people access a range of services designed to meet their physical and emotional needs. Feedback from professionals working with the home varies. Some talk very positively about the home. A youth offending officer stated that the home was, 'excellent and very proactive especially in relation to information sharing and working together'. Another professional stated, 'staff are excellent at communicating and we work well together'. They went on to highlight that, 'staff have developed really good relationships with the young person'. Other professionals highlight issues in relation to the support young people receive for their mental health. They were concerned that staff had not been able to commit to support programmes that had been suggested. They added that management of some young people's anxieties was sometimes, 'inconsistent'. There is a lack of effective joint working between mental health services and the home. This means that strategies to address concerning behaviours do not contain adequate detail or depth. This limits the ability of staff to respond consistently. It also limits the support staff provide to young people that have emotional and psychological needs. In addition, staff have not received training on specific aspects of practice that would help them support young people and manage their behaviour safely. This affects the confidence of some staff members.

Medication is stored safely and any medication administered to young people is discussed with their doctor. Records do not evidence these conversations in sufficient detail and medication labels are not updated in line with changing medical advice. This creates the potential for confusion. The impact of this for young people is reduced by a consistent staff team who know the young people's medical needs well.

Young people know how to complain and their complaints are taken seriously. This ensures that young people feel their views are valued. In addition, young people are supported to attend and contribute to their reviews. This ensures that young people are cared for in line with individualised care plans and develops young people's confidence to influence decisions about their care. Young people are not actively

encouraged to read their files or to add their views in writing.

Staff work creatively to support young people's education. For some young people this is a significant challenge and involves the co-ordination of a number of education placements throughout the week. Young people's attendance improves because of this. Staff also support young people with homework which helps their attainment.

The home is appropriately maintained. Any damage is quickly rectified which helps staff and young people to take pride in the home's environment.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people report that they generally feel safe and can identify a number of adults they can talk to if they felt unsafe.

Staff show a good awareness of key safeguarding issues including child sexual exploitation and talk passionately about the need to keep young people safe. In addition, staff have a good understanding of young people's particular vulnerabilities and how these might place young people at risk if they went missing. This awareness has helped to reduce missing incidents significantly. The police talk positively about the home and in particular about the Registered Manager. Clear protocols exist between the home and the police. This ensures staff are clear about the actions they should take if young people go missing. Young people are responded to positively on their return. They also have the opportunity to see an independent person to discuss any concerns they may have. Reports from these meetings are shared with the police but are not always shared with the home in a timely manner. This means that missing from home records lack detail about the reasons given by young people for going missing and the action taken in light of this. A reduced number of missing incidents and the positive relationships that exist between staff and young people limits any potential adverse impact.

The use of physical restraint is minimal. There have been three restraints since the last inspection; all of these were used to keep staff or young people safe. All staff are suitably trained in the home's restraint techniques and show a good awareness of de-escalation methods. The Registered Manager monitors the use of restraint and ensures records are robust. This helps staff to improve their practice and ensures young people are offered appropriate support following any incident of restraint.

Staff and young people do not identify bullying as an issue at the home.

Staff are carefully selected through the home's recruitment processes. References are verified and all staff have Disclosure and Barring Service checks in place prior to starting their employment. One staff file reviewed did not evidence all of the other required checks. Specifically their file did not show evidence that the reasons for leaving previous employment had been adequately explored. The impact of this is reduced by the other checks in place. Staff are knowledgeable about the home's

whistle blowing procedures which further helps to protect young people from unsafe adults. There have been two complaints against staff since the last inspection. Both were robustly handled by the Registered Manager. The Local Authority Designated Officer confirmed this and talked positively about the home and their handling of complaints.

The home is appropriately secure. Bedrooms contain potential hazards that put young people at risk of harm, such as a number of items that could be used as ligatures. The Registered Manager took action to remove the majority of these during the inspection. This minimised the immediate risk of harm to young people. In addition, staff do not receive training regarding ligature use despite this being a potential issue for the home. This impacts on the confidence of staff when supporting young people.

Leadership and management

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

The home is managed by a suitably qualified, experienced Registered Manager. The Registered Manager has been in post since August 2010 and is committed to improving the service offered by the home.

There was one requirement from the last inspection. This related to records of control, restraint and discipline and has been addressed by the Registered Manager. The Registered Manager is aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the home and has a development plan in place. There are regular visits to the home by an independent person. In addition, the Registered Manager undertakes regular monitoring of the home's records and processes and produces well-written quarterly reports regarding this. These processes help to improve some aspects of the service offered by the home. The Registered Manager has also made significant changes to the recording systems used in the home. These improvements are yet to be fully embedded.

The home's Statement of Purpose is regularly updated and clearly outlines the home's aims and objectives. This ensures that social workers, young people, staff and families are clear about the services offered by the home.

Significant events relating to the protection of young people are communicated promptly to relevant agencies, and where appropriate families. This helps to ensure young people are protected. There is also an effective system for notifying HMCI, Ofsted of any notifiable incident relating to the home, young people, or staff.

The Registered Manager ensures that regular checks of electrical and fire equipment are carried out and that other health and safety requirements are met. This helps to keep staff and young people safe and the building well maintained.

Staff talk positively about the support that they receive from the Registered Manager. In particular, staff highlight regular and effective supervision. New staff

talk positively about their induction and the additional support they receive. New staff are sometimes left in sole charge of the home at night, prior to the completion of their probationary period. This is risk assessed by the Registered Manager and has not impacted negatively on staff or on the support that the young people receive.

Records are stored securely. A record of the medication administered is not kept by the home after young people move out. This information is recorded in young people's files, which leave with them. This has no direct impact on young people.

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.