

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 operated by a private organisation and is registered to provide care and accommodation for two young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties; it is operated in line with a clear therapeutic model. The organisation also provides a registered school around which its homes in this area are based.

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 **inadequate**.

While children and young people are looked after well and their outcomes are good, there is a succession of strategic and managerial shortfalls in the operation of this children's home, resulting in an overall judgement of inadequate. Procedures are established but records are poorly maintained. Recruitment and vetting procedures are poorly managed at an organisational level, which have had an impact on the judgement for safeguarding.

The quality of care for children and young people is good. Young people with complex difficulties and challenges make meaningful progress at the home. They are nurtured and cared for by a very committed and responsive staff team. Staff are very knowledgeable about young people's needs, personalities and complexities.

Young people receive personalised care and therapy at this service. Their individuality is identified and there is a clear commitment to exploring and meeting young people's complex and diverse needs. Young people value their relationships with staff and engage with their therapeutic input.

Young people address significant deficits in educational attendance and achievement. They make good educational progress and enjoy their engagement with learning. Young people feel supported in their transition from a challenging adolescence into young adult life.

Safeguarding procedures within the home promote sound risk and behaviour

management processes. Young people's safety and risk-taking activities are closely monitored. They are provided with care and opportunities that enable them to explore emotional resilience and change behaviours.

There are six statutory requirements and three recommendations made as a result of this inspection. These relate to documentary shortfalls, and recruitment, training and deployment of staff.

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
5 (2001)	keep under review and, where appropriate, revise the statement of purpose and notify the HMCI of any such revision within 28 days (Regulation 5 (a) and (b))	30/08/2013
26 (2001)	ensure persons are fit to work at a children's home (Regulation 26 (1) and 26 (3) Schedule 2)	30/08/2013
25 (2001)	ensure that the employment of any persons on a temporary basis at the children's home will not prevent children from receiving such continuity of care as is reasonable to meet their needs (Regulation 25 (2))	30/08/2013
29 (2001)	ensure the records specified in Schedule 4 are maintained and up to date. This refers to ensuring the staff duty roster includes all persons working at the children's home, with particular regard to including the hours worked by the manager of the home (Regulation 29 (1) Schedule 4.11)	30/08/2013
29 (2001)	maintain in the children's home the records specified in Schedule 4, ensure that they are kept up to date and shall be retained for at least fifteen years from the date of the last entry. This is with regard to the staff rota (Regulation 29 (1) and 29 (2))	30/08/2013
30 (2001)	ensure the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 5 are without delay notified to the persons indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of the table. (Regulation 30 (1))	30/08/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure the home contributes to the development of each child's care plan,

including the pathway plan for “eligible” care leavers and works collaboratively with the young person’s social worker or personal adviser in implementing the plan (NMS 12.2)

- ensure where only one member of staff is on duty at any time, a risk assessment has been carried out and recorded in writing, identifying any likely risks to children, staff and members of the public (NMS 17.9)
- ensure all existing care staff have attained a minimum level 3 qualification. (NMS 18.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people feel looked after, safe and supported while living at this home. They thrive, develop and grow in maturity. Young people develop in adolescence because they live in an environment that identifies, develops and celebrates difference. They are given excellent opportunities to make sense of their backgrounds, experiences and behaviours.

All aspects of young people’s lives are greatly enhanced by the social, emotional and behavioural support they receive from staff. Young people are able to explore how they see themselves, relate to others and manage the challenges of growing up. Young people receive good support to develop independence skills and have clear plans for their future, including a choice of career.

Young people build and enjoy good attachments with staff. Relationships are meaningful and young people feel safe to express their past experiences, worries and goals for the future. However, they do not like not knowing who is going to look after them, which is a result of some staffing difficulties.

Young people grow in confidence as they experience a strong sense of nurturing and community in the home. Young people who present complex behaviours grow in self-confidence and forge emotional resilience. They develop positive identities and develop meaningful social relationships. Young people feel more confident and secure. They are able to discuss, unravel and resolve the results of risky behaviour, impacts on others and look at different strategies.

Young people embrace the importance of attending and doing well in education. They have addressed some significant deficits in both educational attendance and achievement. Young people have plans for further education and some are already involved in employment. All young people enjoy a variety of activities. They enjoy a range of outdoor pursuits as part of education. Other young people enjoy having independent time to go out in the community, make friends, play pool and BMX biking.

Young people feel valued because they are encouraged to express their views, feelings and wishes. Young people know how to complain. They feel listened to

because key workers and staff make time to talk about their interests and concerns. Young people grow in confidence because they feel their concerns are taken seriously and their views are respected.

Young people enjoy good and improved health. They are supported to understand and begin to take responsibility for their health needs. Some young people have a developing awareness about how their emotional and mental well-being is part of their health and behaviour. Young people also develop an understanding of how lifestyle choices can impact on their health. They maintain healthier lifestyles in terms of healthy eating and exercise and make clear efforts to improve personal hygiene.

Quality of care

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

Young people are cared for and thrive because there are effective frameworks for care, education and behaviour management. These systems and the good quality of care demonstrate that all staff are consistently concerned with the welfare of young people at the service.

Young people benefit from good care planning with detailed and comprehensive documentation in place. Their needs, individuality and backgrounds are assessed in detail and reflected throughout their written care plans. There are good working relationships with placing authorities, but there is a lack of documented pathway planning from placing authorities.

Young people are looked after by a motivated and energetic staff team. Their care is contemporary and individualised due to regular review and adjustment to care assessments and review of staff practice. The care framework is further improved with meaningful and relevant key working. Young people have records that link their support to their care plans and also give meaning to their childhood experiences.

Young people invest in their care plans because plans are meaningful. Staff understand and respect how young people's challenges and experiences have impacted on them. Staff complete direct work with young people's families. They also work with the young people's placing authorities to maintain safe and meaningful contact with young people's families. As a result, young people benefit from a greater understanding of their backgrounds and family connections.

Young people do well in education because of the support provided by staff in the home. The home's routines are set up to respond to the education attendance and engagement needs of the young people. They are given full support to develop social skills and self-confidence to enable them to cope and positively interact in society, their communities and reach their chosen potential.

The home promotes positive relationships between young people and staff. Young people do well because staff have an in-depth understanding of their needs and

individuality. There are meaningful connections because staff are intuitive and responsive to the moods, emotions and expressions of young people.

Participation by young people is valued by the staff. Young people grow in confidence because they make positive contributions to all aspects of their lives and the running of the home. Young people's records contain information that reflects and values their individuality, choices and views.

Arrangements to promote and monitor health and medical needs are effectively managed. Arrangements for dealing with medication are safe and effective. All young people have regular checks and health is promoted and closely monitored with good partnership working. There is a strong focus on the emotional and mental health of young people and this is facilitated with regular therapeutic input.

Young people are looked after in a well-designed and homely environment. They enjoy and respect the comfort and homeliness of the house. They choose items and take pride in the upkeep of the home. This investment in the physical environment equips young people with good domestic skills, useful in their independent living plans.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

There are clear regulatory shortfalls in the safer recruiting procedures in the home. Children and young people are not safeguarded due to instances of poor recruitment and vetting procedures. References from the most recent and previous employers are not consistently obtained. There is no clear evidence that significant gaps and discrepancies in employment history have been picked up or verified by the service's recruitment and vetting procedures. Children and young people are not safeguarded because employees commence employment prior to recruitment and vetting checks being completed.

The concerns which result from the most recent recruitment and vetting process do not reflect the robust procedures which were evident in the inspection of other staff files. Despite recent recruitment procedures lacking the necessary rigour, young people benefit from good improvements in their welfare and safety. Levels of safety are effective because staff implement safeguarding strategies that are appropriate to the significant vulnerability of, and levels of risk presented by, the young people living at this home.

Behaviour improves because staff have a good insight into the individual needs of young people. Young people say they feel safe and protected because they have good relationships with staff. Their behaviour is explored and assessed because they can talk about concerns and engage in therapeutic sessions.

Young people's needs are complex. Staff have an excellent knowledge of how young

people's previous experiences impact on and influence behaviour. Safeguarding strategies focus on extensive and thorough risk assessment. Safety plans often result in high levels of supervision of some young people, both inside and outside the home. Young people respond well to the individualised safeguarding and behaviour management strategies and therapies. As they develop more insight into their behaviours, they are able to adapt, develop and positively enjoy a good degree of independence and free time.

Young people's welfare and safety are effectively addressed because the staff are proactive in establishing effective links and working partnerships with agencies. There are good procedures to monitor and impact on risk-taking activities, including young people going missing from care.

Young people are supported with detailed risk and behaviour management plans. Staff are trained in behaviour management, including physical restraint. Behaviour is positively managed in the home and this is reflected in the total lack of incidents of physical intervention.

Young people develop in self-esteem as a result of living in an environment that reinforces positive behaviour. This is reflected in the number of positive consequences outweighing negative consequences. Young people are kept safe with clear and accountable behaviour management recording processes. They are able to discuss and sign the central records that relate to the management of their behaviour.

Young people are looked after in a safe environment. Their safety is promoted with regular safety checks, which include making sure children and staff know what to do should there be a fire.

Leadership and management

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

The home lacks managerial stability. There has been no Registered Manager at this home since April 2013. Two managers have been recruited in this time. The second new manager is recently appointed and an application to register this individual is reported by the provider to be underway.

The home operates according to the Statement of Purpose, which is generally accurate but does not fully reflect the changing managerial arrangements. An up-to-date copy of the home's Statement of Purpose has not been submitted to Ofsted.

Current staffing arrangements in the home negatively impact on young people's sense of permanency and security. Staffing arrangements are ad hoc. For example, the rota for the week of this inspection showed gaps in staffing cover. There are some days when young people do not know who is going to look after them.

There is no risk assessment for the lone working arrangements in the home.

Consequently, the safety of young people and staff in the home is not fully promoted.

Further concerns relate to the whereabouts and availability of staff. For example, the manager's working hours are not recorded on the rota. In addition, the rota records for all staff working in the home are not consistently available. The management team does not maintain and retain records as required. These shortfalls negatively impact on the registered person's responsibility and accountability for the safety of children and young people living at the home.

Young people are looked after by a dedicated team of core staff. Staff value the training and development opportunities, which are relevant to the needs of the young people. This includes good induction, behaviour management and safeguarding training. However, some more established staff have not completed the relevant level 3 qualification.

Young people receive a good quality of care because there is a core group of staff who are enthusiastic and work closely as a team. They consistently strive to place the interests of young people at the centre of the service. The staff are dedicated to providing a nurturing environment for young people. Behaviour management is a strength of the home; young people benefit from improvements in their safety and behaviour. While significant events are well managed by the staff, these have not been consistently notified to Ofsted as required by the Children's Homes Regulations 2001. This limits the regulator's ability to monitor what is happening in the home.

The new manager has embraced the role of leadership and is clearly aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the service. There is a clear action plan, and improvement is being managed strategically and with clear timescales. There are clear strategies in place to address shortfalls in the administrative features in the home.

Monthly monitoring reports are routinely submitted to Ofsted. The monitoring processes identify shortfalls. New management arrangements are in place to ensure recommendations are addressed effectively. Recommendations from the previous inspection are met, thus showing the service's ability to improve.

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.