

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Mark Blesky
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This private children's home provides for three young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

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**.

This home provides adequate overall care with some good areas of practice. An acting manager has been in post since February 2012. An application has not yet been submitted to Ofsted for registration.

Good examples of leadership are evidenced in a number of areas, however there are other areas where management and specifically the monitoring of the quality of care, is not effective. This has resulted in systems being less robust in areas such as the recording of missing persons and physical restraint. In addition the home does not have a written development plan so it is not possible to ascertain whether improvements are planned.

It is acknowledged that while there are shortfalls in meeting regulations and standards, good care practices and procedures have minimised the impact of these for young people.

Good progress and improved outcomes for young people are being achieved, particularly in relation to their education. This is largely as a result of the personalised support they receive at school.

However, it is not clear that the home considers and integrates the progress made by young people at school to inform and shape their practice within the home, for example how they support young people to overcome difficulties with numeracy and literacy.

Young people feel safe, supported and well looked after in this home and it is clear

that placing social workers are very pleased with the progress that their young people have made.

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
16 (2001)	maintain a procedure to be followed when any child accommodated in a children's home is absent without permission which has regard to any relevant local authority or police protocols on missing children (Regulation 16 (4) (b))	31/05/2012
17B (2001)	ensure the record of physical restraint confirms that the person authorised by the registered provider to make the record has spoken to the child concerned and the person using the measure about the use of the measure; the signature of the person authorised to make the record and any methods used to avoid the need to use that measure (Regulation 17B (3) (h) (I) 17B (4) (b))	31/05/2012
34 (2001)	ensure that the registered person shall establish and maintain a system for improving the quality of care provided in the children's home. The system referred to in paragraph (1) shall provide for consultation with children accommodated in the home, their parents and placing authorities. (Regulation 34 (1) (b) (3))	30/06/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the home has and is fully implementing, a written education policy that promotes and values children's education (NMS 8.5)
- ensure that the registered person has a written development plan, reviewed annually, for the future of the home, either identifying any planned changes in the operation or resources of the service, or confirming the continuation of the home's current operation and resource (NMS 15.2)
- ensure that managers and staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities and that the level of delegation and responsibility of the manager and staff, and the lines of accountability, are clearly defined. (NMS 21.4)

- ensure children's views, wishes and feelings are acted upon, in the day to day running of the home and important decisions or changes in the child's life, unless this is contrary to their interests- this refers specifically to the recording of minutes at house meetings (NMS 1.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Children and young people make good progress in developing a positive self view. They are able to make and sustain attachments, are emotionally resilient and have knowledge and understanding of their background.

Social workers say that the home has been successful in promoting young peoples development and that the young people have made good progress in the home. Educational progress and the development of self-control have been key areas where the home has improved the lives of the young people.

Young people are supported to understand the importance of healthy living and of making choices that support their good health and welfare. Young people benefit from regular health checks and assessments and they are encouraged to make healthy choices in their diets. Staff discourage activities or lifestyle choices that can negatively impact on health such as the use of tobacco and other substances. This enables young people to gain insights into healthy living and to manage their health effectively.

All young people are supported to express themselves and communicate their needs and choices. Staff in the home engage in training, such as sign language, to ensure that they have a more diverse range of skills with which to communicate and support young people.

Young people in the home express themselves in different ways and staff are aware of the importance of both observation and the use of more analytical skills to interpret feelings and behaviour. Staff that understand the young people and have gained insights into behaviour through training are better prepared to respond and manage young people effectively.

Young people receive prompt support from external agencies and more specialist services, such as the community adolescent mental health services (CAMHS). Partnership arrangements are in place, with these core healthcare and community services and are well established.

Young people say that they are involved in both their care planning and placement planning. Young people are consulted formally during their keyworking sessions and collectively at young people's meetings where they can express views about the home and broader aspects of their care.

Young people say that the staff are there to help them. A young person gave an

example of where the support that they had received following a difficulty resulted in them being able to avoid the risk taking behaviour that would have previously occurred. Young people say that the staff put them first, listen to them and care about them.

Quality of care

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

Young people feel safe and protected and understand that staff have responsibilities to promote their welfare. Staff engage with young people and this provides the young people with adults that they can trust and rely on.

Young people receive both care and support. Staff have further developed their range of behaviour management strategies. These are respectful of the young people's feelings and likely to encourage more positive behaviour. Sanctioning and the need for formal behaviour control is not commonly used. Staff say that this is because young people and staff negotiate and compromise. Young people say that the staff show them respect and this helps them to feel supported.

Young people are given good opportunities by staff to communicate their individual and diverse views. This provides young people with the self-confidence to express themselves and feel confident to engage and bond with the staff. Children's meetings are more formal occasions where young people can express their collective views about the home and where they may influence decisions made. Children's meetings are recorded but are limited in detail, this has minimal on young people because of the informal dialogue that takes place. However it does not sufficiently keep staff abreast of the decisions made.

Placement plans and care planning is highly individualised and much progress has been made by the home in this area. Young people benefit from plans that reflect their differences and differing needs. Diversity relating to culture, religion and a range of individual needs are reflected in these documents. This planning ensures that young people are considered as individuals and have the best opportunities to work and progress towards their individual goals and expectations.

Young people are aware of their plans, their rights and they have appropriate expectations of care and support. They are provided with suitable education that is tailored to meet their assessed needs and enables them to achieve. A local school, which is linked to the home, provides education for all young people that are outside of mainstream education. The school constantly monitors the young people's progress and adjusts and shapes learning effectively. This has provided measurable benefits for the young people and good progress has been made. Social workers spoken to commented that the school is a significant factor in their decision to place in this service and this school is making progress where others have failed.

While it is noted the school is making very good progress in supporting young people's education, the home is less engaged in this process. Although

communication is regular between the home and school, the home remains somewhat dislocated from the educational role. It is not evident that staff in the home have considered how young people's education has influenced their progress in the home or consideration given as to how their own care practices can positively impact on young people's progress in education, such as providing additional support where required.

Healthcare needs are well identified and met. Young people attend routine appointments and receive support and guidance from the staff who promote healthy living. Young people discuss with staff healthily lifestyles and are supported to make decisions that benefit their healthy development. Medical consent is in place for all young people to ensure that there is no delay in treatments. Arrangements for dealing with medication are safe and effective.

Staff and the acting manager have made contacts with external agencies, such as the police, health and social services and demonstrate that they are able to work closely and effectively for the benefit of the young people. Young people remain central to these services and benefit from this collaborative working.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say that they feel safe, are well looked after and value the staff support. One young person commented that the 'staff are wicked', and clarified that this was a positive phrase that meant staff were great.

Young people are made aware of their rights and understand that they have a right to feel safe and valued. This gives young people confidence and assurance that their views and wishes are important and regarded.

Young people are aware that if they are not happy or feel unsupported they can complain and action will be taken. They demonstrate that they are confident to speak up, as a result of their increasing self-confidence. The home maintains procedures to record and address complaints and bullying. Staffing levels are typically high and this provides an environment where young people have appropriate supervision from staff, as a result of which few incidents occur.

Relationships between staff and the young people are respectful and warm. Behaviour management is typically harmonious and punitive systems of control are not used. When behaviour is less positive staff have sufficient insights into the more diverse and individual needs of the young people to intervene successfully. This supports the young people to make positive choices and develop their own self-control.

Physical intervention is uncommon in this home and is only used when circumstances necessitate this to safeguard the welfare of young people. Young people are supported to understand these events. Records of incidents are made and details of

the event recorded. The manager and senior staff oversee all incidents of physical intervention to ensure practices seek to minimise and reduce further episodes. Currently some of the information that must be recorded in line with regulations is not available.

Young people do not regularly go missing, but if they do, staff have procedures to search, report and return them to the home. Liaison has taken place with the local police and the acting manager and staff are aware of protocols related to missing children. However the recording of young people missing is not rigorously maintained and only scant details of the incident are recorded. Current government guidance such as the runaway and missing from home and care (RMFHC) protocol is not available in the home and rather dated documents are being used instead. Therefore, systems are not robust in this important area and there are clear shortfalls in procedure. There is no evidence, however, that the welfare of young people is compromised as a result of these weaknesses.

The home maintains safeguarding procedures, which are in accordance with the local authority. Young people are protected by staff that are trained to understand safeguarding procedures and how to protect them. Guidance and supervision is maintained for all young people to ensure that any risks to their welfare are minimised and to ensure that they will be appropriately supported in the event of any allegations.

Appropriate recruitment procedures are in place to assess the suitability of staff to work with young people. All staff are recruited through an established and experienced interview panel. No new staff are permitted to begin work until all necessary statutory and reference checks have been completed.

Risk assessment is incorporated within care and placement planning and considers both environmental and situational factors that may cause harm to young people. Staff take appropriate actions are taken to reduce risk. Assessments are insightful and realistic and aim to help the staff and young people understand factors that increase or reduce risk. They are appropriately reviewed to take into account any emerging factors as a result of which the welfare of young people is safeguarded.

The home is well maintained and free from obvious hazards or risks to health and safety. Fire evacuation procedures are in place along with procedures for maintaining fire safety equipment. All staff receive fire safety guidance within their induction period and refresher training is provided periodically. Staff are aware and implement these to keep young people safe from the risk of fire.

Leadership and management

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

The acting manager has been in post since February 2012 and has not, at the point of inspection, submitted an application for registration to Ofsted.

The registered provider has increased the frequency of visits to the home and the supervision of the acting manager while this application process progresses. This has provided increased support and monitoring of the home.

One requirement was made at the last interim inspection and this has been fully resolved. The home also has a good track record in relation to taking action regarding any complaints/concerns resulting in an improved standard of care.

A Statement of Purpose is maintained within the home detailing the services and provisions for the young people. This promotes the care and services offered and acknowledges young people as individuals and seeks to recognise their more diverse needs.

The acting manager monitors the standard of care at regular intervals. While improvements are evident in a number of areas, systems that support the consistent development of the home in relation to the monitoring of performance are not present. There was no development plan in place and the manager is unclear of planned improvements.

Monitoring visits in line with regulation 33 also take to provide checks on services that are provided. A report is prepared and action is taken by the manager and staff to address any shortfall or area for development. This practice ensures that standards are maintained and services are audited.

The young people have a wide range of needs and the home has created a environment where these needs are both understood and met. Social workers spoken to during the inspection said that the home had made good and excellent progress in supporting the young people. Examples were provided that included both day-to-day living and also areas of more specific progress regarding education and behaviour management.

Staff are trained specifically to address and meet the needs of the young people and also partake in a broad range of related training in core areas of care. Staffing ratios are typically high in the home and the home is adequately resourced to meet the needs of the children and young people cared for. It was however noted that the acting manager has been working more care shifts than managing the home and this has resulted in some matters not being identified and addressed. This matter was discussed with the registered provider who confirmed that this is being addressed.

All records and files that relate to the young people and their care planning are clear, up to date and stored securely, and contribute to an understanding of the young people's lives. Young people are able to access their files and staff provide support and guidance to ensure they understand their history and the decisions that are made. This allows young people the opportunity to question or challenge the decisions and information that have influenced care planning decisions.

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.