

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Dennis Bradley
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is registered to provide care and accommodation for three children with emotional and behavioural problems. The home is owned and operated by a private provider.

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 this home provides an adequate service to young people. Staff endeavour to promote improved outcomes for young people. However, some young people regularly engage in risk taking behaviours that place their welfare at risk.

Young people receive good, personalised support from staff and benefit from having individual care plans and risk assessments. They receive support and encouragement from staff to attend and engage positively in their education and staff work hard to maintain their school and college placements. Some of the young people are making progress in their education and attainment.

Staff have built positive relationships with young people whose behaviour, at times, can be very challenging. They actively seek, and take into account young people's wishes and feelings about how they should be cared for. Young people are positive about the care and support they receive. Overall young people make satisfactory progress in their placements.

The management team works hard to try to ensure the home is managed efficiently and effectively. They understand the home's strengths and areas for development but have not always taken effective action to address the latter.

Two requirements and five recommendations have been made as a result of this inspection. These relate to the home's records of incidents when staff use physical restraint on young people; the home's policies and procedures, and the action taken when young people make allegations about 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
16 (2001)	ensure prompt referral is made to the local authority in whose area the home is situated of any allegation of abuse or neglect, in particular ensure that any allegations against staff are reported promptly to the local authority designated officer (Regulation 16(2)(b))	08/07/2013
30 (2001)	notify Ofsted if any of the relevant events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 5 take place. (Regulation 30(1))	08/07/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure if any staff in the home resort to any measure of control or restraint this is carefully and clearly recorded with full details by the staff involved (Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph 2.91)
- ensure the home's safeguarding policy is comprehensive and in particular includes procedures and advice in relation to e-safety and child sexual exploitation. Submit the home's child protection procedures for consideration and comment to the Local Safeguarding Children Board and the Local Authority Designated Officer for Child Protection (NMS 4.4 and 20.4 and Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph 2.67)
- ensure staff know and implement the local authority's policy in relation to children going missing and their role in implementing that policy. Ensure the home's procedures are compatible with the procedures of the local authority (NMS 5.2 and 5.4)
- ensure the young people's guide to the home includes all the information specified in NMS 13.5 (NMS 13.5)
- ensure the system for recruiting staff includes an effective system for reaching decisions where concerns about suitability are discovered during the recruitment process. (NMS 16.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **adequate**.

Young people receive appropriate support from staff to be healthy and stay healthy. They have access to a range of health services to promote their well-being. Staff also provide guidance on keeping safe and being healthy, such as advice on the dangers of smoking and illicit drug use. However, some young people choose not to take the advice and continue to put their health at risk by, for example, smoking.

Since the last full inspection the attendance and achievement of young people in education has been variable. For some, their achievement has been affected as a result. Some young people are making satisfactory progress taking into account their starting point when they moved into the home.

Young people receive support to engage in positive activities within the local community, such as cycling, swimming, and fishing. They also have the opportunity to participate in activities which help them acquire skills they will need when they leave care, such as preparing and cooking meals. Some young people are making satisfactory progress in this regard.

Young people also receive appropriate support and guidance about how to stop engaging in risk taking behaviours, such as going missing. But some choose to continue engaging in such behaviours and this has led to staff having significant concerns about their safety and welfare.

Most young people benefit from appropriate contact with family members and friends and staff actively support this. This enables young people to maintain links with people who are important to them and, for some it facilitates their move back home.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from positive and warm relationships with staff. They receive care from a stable and experienced staff team who work hard to promote a positive atmosphere in the home. Staff value the views and wishes of the young people and actively consult them about their care and the running of the home. Young people are aware of how to make a complaint and confirmed they can talk to staff if they have any worries or concerns.

Staff are committed to improving young people's life chances by supporting and promoting their education. They actively address any barriers to young people's education and work hard to develop good working relationships with schools, education and training placements. This helps ensure any concerns or issues are dealt with quickly and has positive results for the young people. Most of the young people currently attend school or college regularly. Staff make sure young people's achievements are celebrated which helps build their self-esteem and confidence.

Staff ensure the diverse needs of the young people are clearly recorded in their individual placement plans. They encourage young people to play an active role in the development and review of their plans. Young people said they know about their placement plans and are happy with them.

Staff are good at working in partnership with social workers and other professionals, such as those in health and education. This helps to ensure young people's needs are addressed. A social worker said, 'staff are good at keeping me up to date.' Where appropriate, staff also work constructively with parents. This helps to ensure continuity of care as well as good outcomes for the young people.

Young people's good health is actively encouraged by staff and health promotion agencies. They are provided with a healthy diet and are able to prepare and make meals in the home's kitchen.

Staff are good at supporting and encouraging young people to develop independence skills in preparation for them leaving care. Young people are also encouraged to participate in sports and leisure activities as well as choosing different hobbies and interests.

Staff work constructively with young people to enable them to develop socially acceptable behaviour. Overall there has been a reduction in the incidents of negative behaviour displayed by the young people.

The home is decorated and furnished to a good standard. Staff and the young people ensure the home is well cared for so that it continues to be comfortable, and homely.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Staff try hard to protect young people's welfare and young people said they felt safe living at the home. It is a key part of the home's ethos that any bullying is unacceptable and there has only been one incident of bullying behaviour since the last inspection.

All the staff receive regular training in the home's safeguarding procedures. However, staff did not take prompt action to notify the local authority designated officer (LADO) when a young person made an allegation about a member of staff. Prompt referral to the LADO helps ensure the allegation is dealt with appropriately. The outcome of the investigation into the allegation was that it was not substantiated. The home's safeguarding procedures are not sufficiently comprehensive. For example, they do not include procedures and advice in relation to e-safety. Therefore staff do not have guidance regarding how to promote and raise awareness of e-safety for the benefit of the young people.

Staff endeavour to minimise the risk to young people when they go missing or fail to

return to the home at the agreed time. For example, they try to actively monitor the whereabouts and behaviour of young people who are at risk of going missing. They also try to help young people understand the risks to their safety and welfare. However, the home's missing from care procedures are not fully compatible with those of the home's local authority. Also, staff do not fully implement the local authority's missing from care procedures. For example, although they notify the police and the young person's placing authority, they do not notify the local authority when a young person is missing. Fully implementing the local authority's procedures helps to safeguard young people's welfare. The frequency young people go missing has not always reduced over their time at the home.

Staff follow detailed risk assessments to help them manage the behaviours displayed by young people. Positive behaviour is promoted by staff and they agree individual targets and rewards with young people. Overall, when staff use sanctions these are relevant and reasonable.

Staff only use physical restraint on young people as a last resort. There have been two incidents where staff have used physical restraint on young people in the last 12 months. However, the records staff made of these incidents in the home's restraint record book omitted important information. For example, one record did not include sufficient details of the young person's behaviour leading to the use of physical restraint. A separate record of this incident did include more detail. But this was not recorded in a bound, numbered book that prevents people from tampering with it after it has been completed. Keeping suitable records facilitates the regular review of incidents of challenging behaviour by the management team and staff, so that it can inform future practice.

The home's staff recruitment and selection procedures are not sufficiently comprehensive. They do not include a clear system for reaching decisions when concerns about an applicant's suitability are discovered during the recruitment process. Robust recruitment and selection procedures help make sure only suitable people are employed to care for the young people.

Young people live in a home that is safe and secure. For example, there are appropriate systems within the home to identify and minimise any risks or hazards.

Leadership and management

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

The management team are suitably qualified and experienced and overall provide satisfactory leadership for the staff team. They try to ensure the home has a clear ethos and staff work with commonly understood objectives. However, they have only taken action to address one of the made following the previous inspection of the home. The person carrying out visits to the home under Regulation 33 now reports on how the home is supporting young people to enjoy and achieve. This helps the home review young people's progress in relation to this important area of their care and development. Although the young person's guide to the home has been revised

to make it more child friendly, it still does not include some important information. For example it does not include information about how young people can contact their independent reviewing officer. This could make it more difficult for a young person to access appropriate support if they are not satisfied with the care offered to them by the home.

The management team continually monitor and review the quality of care provided by the service. All of the staff are qualified and experienced and they receive regular supervision and support from the management team. Staff demonstrate a commitment to meeting the complex and diverse needs of the young people. They have access to regular training opportunities in caring for children and young people. Appropriate staffing levels enable staff to spend time meeting the individual needs of the young people. Regular staff meetings and handover arrangements between shifts help ensure there is satisfactory communication within the staff team. This helps staff to keep up-to-date with any changes to young people's needs or circumstances.

Legislation requires the registered person to notify Ofsted of any serious incident. However, they failed to do so on two occasions. Consequently, the regulator was unable to monitor the action taken by the home regarding these incidents and the outcome.

The home keeps detailed records about the care and welfare of young people. Staff support young people to engage and contribute to their case records. The records are up-to-date and stored securely.

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.