

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Jennifer Reed
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four young people aged from 10 to 17 years with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

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**.

The home provides detailed, individualised care plans and well-considered strategies to meet the assessed needs of accommodated young people. Care practices within the home are sound, supported by strong leadership and management oversight. However, the good quality of care provided to young people is not always effective in helping all young people to achieve improved outcomes in their lives.

Some young people do not to fully engage with the help and support offered and they continue to place themselves at risk of harm. They are making poor choices that mean they are not kept safe. Presenting challenging behaviour within the home leads to some young people sometimes not feeling safe. However, some young people make very good progress in their personal development and their lives are enriched by the new skills they acquire.

The quality of relationships between young people and staff are variable. The home regularly consults young people about their views. They have opportunities to be involved in decisions about their daily care and the development of care practices within the home.

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
17B (2001)	ensure within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline, a written record includes the duration of the measure of restraint (Regulation 17B (4) (a))	21/12/2012

Recommendations

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

- improve the effectiveness of the support provided to young people to develop and practice skills to build and maintain positive relationships and resolve conflicts positively (NMS 3.5)
- ensure young people are effectively helped to understand the dangers and risks of leaving the home without permission (NMS 5.8)
- provide effective support to young people to assist them to understand and manage their own behaviour differently when the choices they make are poor or the risks unacceptable (Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph 2.62)
- provide staff with written guidance on their health and safety; in particular, with reference to the risk of following young people along the main road, by foot or by car, on occasions when young people go missing (NMS 10.7)
- ensure the home only provides admission to those young people whose assessed needs they can reasonably expect to meet. (NMS 11.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people generally enjoy good health. Their well-being is promoted by the regular medical checks staff encourage them to have and good access to the health services that they need. Young people's emotional and physical well-being is enhanced by the good health information and sensitively delivered advice they receive. This support helps them to take some responsibility for their welfare and make improvements in their diet and daily healthcare routines. However, despite the advice and support offered, some young people continue to engage in activities that pose risks to their health, for example, drinking alcohol and smoking.

The educational achievement of young people varies between individuals. Some young people are successfully supported to maintain their regular attendance at mainstream schools. This enables young people to continue their education without disruption and to maintain contact with their friends in the community. However, not all young people living in this home are successfully engaging in educational activities

with their peers. Some young people's behaviour results in their exclusion from classroom settings and they do not benefit from a shared learning environment. Some young people have made limited progress in their studies.

Young people take part in a range of leisure activities of their choice within the community. For example, young people said that they play golf; go horse-riding, shop and eat out in restaurants. Some young people continue to take part in age-appropriate clubs, team sports and other leisure pursuits within the community. These opportunities help to develop social and physical skills and abilities, encourage regular exercise and increases young people's confidence and self-esteem.

Some young people make positive changes in their behaviour and they know how to keep themselves safe. This improvement contributes to their success in maintaining contact with their families and in making positive relationships with others. However, some young people do not fully engage with the help and support provided by the staff team to meet the aims and objectives of their personalised care plans. This means that these young people continue to make poor choices and to present challenging behaviour that, at times, makes other young people feel unsafe. The continuation of unsafe, anti-social and offending behaviours places these young people and others at risk of harm and reduces placement stability. To ensure that young people's welfare is safeguarded, some young people's placements are terminated by the home or other agencies and young people move on to alternative settings.

Quality of care

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

The home draws up detailed placement plans which are coherent with placing authority care plans. Placement plans guide staff in how best to meet young people's identified and diverse needs and they benefit from being cared for in accordance with their regularly reviewed and updated plans. Staff effectively support young people to contribute to their reviews and planning for their futures. Staff help young people to express their views and to understand why it may not be possible to act upon all the things they would like to happen. Regular key-worker and direct work sessions help young people to gain some understanding of their culture and background. Staff demonstrate a positive regard and respect for young people's individuality and culture and this helps young people to take steps to think about their history and personal identity. These sessions also provide opportunities for young people to reflect upon and discuss their behaviour and progress. However the positive impact of this support on young people's behaviour and progress is variable.

The home provides daily opportunities and more structured options that enable young people to have their say about their care and the development of care practices within the home. Young people have been involved in the development of the young person's guide to the home and they are regularly consulted about menu planning, activities and the decoration of the home. Staff encourage and support young people to take part in a range of community activities that they enjoy. Staff

demonstrate enthusiasm and resilience in their attempts and efforts to provide the support each young person needs. Some young people thrive on the good quality care that they receive. However, some young people have not sustained good relationships and positive engagement with the staff team. Young people hold differing views about staff members and the quality of the care they receive. Their perspectives fluctuate and change, depending upon their current feelings and circumstances.

The home provides young people with good access to the services that they need to meet their needs and fulfil their potential. The home provides young people with clear boundaries and expectations of acceptable behaviour; staff respond appropriately in dealing with any challenging behaviour. A particular strength of the home is shown by the good health outcomes young people achieve. The home also excels in supporting young people's educational achievement. For example, staff transport young people considerable distances to facilitate and sustain their inclusion in their established schools and excluded young people benefit from the provision of individual tutoring within the home.

Staff work proactively with other agencies, parents and families to promote and secure positive outcomes for young people. The home provides detailed monthly summaries of young people's progress to their placing authorities. However, some young people have not achieved mostly positive outcomes while living in this home. Prior to their admission, the likelihood of this was not identified. The manager communicates young people's presenting unmet needs to their placing authorities. The home works proactively with other professionals to ensure such young people move on to other settings which may be able to meet their presenting needs more effectively.

The home provides young people with a comfortable and healthy environment in which to live. Staff encourage young people to make the house 'their home' and personalise areas to their preferred taste. However, a substantial amount of damage has been caused to the building by young people's challenging behaviour. Any damage to the home is made safe and repaired to ensure that young people and staff continue to live in a healthy and safe environment.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The manager and staff undertake regularly updated safeguarding training. Staff demonstrate a good understanding of safeguarding issues and working within local protocols to ensure young people are kept safe. All arising child protection matters are appropriately referred by the company's managers and the home works cooperatively and effectively with other agencies to ensure young people are protected. The company has been commended by the local police force for its exemplary implementation of the local missing person's protocol. The manager of the home has been involved in disseminating this 'best practice' model to local stakeholders.

Young people are cared for by staff who have been thoroughly vetted and checked by the company's rigorous recruitment and selection processes. This contributes to the employment of suitable people to look after young people. The company appropriately refers any concerns about the suitability of employees to the relevant authority to ensure young people are protected.

Staff are vigilant in their care of young people to ensure their safety and well-being. When bullying occurs within the home, staff quickly address the matter to stop further episodes ensuing. Young people are clear that bullying is not tolerated and they feel sufficiently secure to bring this unacceptable behaviour to the attention of staff members.

The home operates an incentive scheme to encourage young people to engage in positive and acceptable behaviours. This system works well for some young people and their behaviour has significantly improved; they are proud of their achievements and appreciate their rewards. However, the incentive scheme does not encourage all young people to modify their unacceptable and anti-social behaviour. This impacts on how safe other young people living in the home may feel. One worker commented, 'a young person regularly complains about the behaviour of other young people; they are not always comfortable living in this home.'

Some young people continue to engage in risk taking and offending behaviours and they go missing, placing themselves at risk of harm. Some young people continue to present extremely challenging behaviour, including serious assaults on staff, teachers, police officers and each other. In some instances, young people's behaviour has led to criminal charges being made against them. All staff are trained in the use behaviour management techniques aimed to reduce tension and de-escalate aggression. The physical intervention techniques employed in the home are only used as a last resort to keep everyone safe; they are designed to be 'pain free'. However, some restraints undertaken to manage high levels of challenging behaviour have resulted in both staff and young people sustaining injuries. All restraints are recorded within a format designed to meet legislative requirements. However, despite the manager having brought to the staff team's attention deficits with regard to entering the duration of any restraint within the dedicated record, a further entry did not include this required information. This shortfall reduces the effective evaluation and monitoring of restraint practice within the home to ensure young people are safeguarded.

Young people are encouraged and supported in taking age-appropriate controlled risks as part of their personal development as they grow into adulthood. The home has robust measures in place to assess and manage risk factors for individuals, the environment, equipment and activities. Regular health and safety audits take place. However, the home has not made an assessment and identified any control measures to manage the likely risks staff may encounter, when following young people who leave the home without permission, onto the adjacent main road.

Leadership and management

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

The manager provides strong leadership and has high aspirations for the young people accommodated in the home. The manager robustly leads the staff team to ensure that a good standard of care and support is provided to young people. The manager and staff are committed to improving young people's experiences of living in the home and the team strives for continual improvement in outcomes for young people. The home satisfactorily addresses the requirements and recommendations arising from inspection processes to contribute to improvements in care standards. There is a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home.

Staff are enthusiastic and stoic in their determination to provide the best possible care to young people and each young person's progress is closely monitored. Regular and very thorough monitoring activities take place each month. This includes regularly seeking the views of young people, families, placing social workers and local agencies working with young people. The data is rigorously analysed by the manager to identify trends and patterns in outcomes for young people, with the aim of raising standards and outcomes for young people.

The home is sufficiently resourced to meet the needs of the accommodated young people. The home employs a sufficient number of staff who receive good support from the company's management team in guiding them in how best to look after young people. There have been a considerable number of changes in the staffing establishment of the home in the past year, with four new staff having been employed in recent months. All new staff benefit from taking part in the home's structured induction programme and they have commenced work on achieving the Children's Workforce Development Council's standards. Not all existing staff have yet achieved a level three qualification, although they are working towards this goal. One new member of staff is the 'intended manager' of the home. The company plans to register this individual as the new manager of the home in coming months.

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 children's homes.