

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Steve Pearson
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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.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service that exceeds minimum requirements

Satisfactory: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is provided by a private company and is registered to care for four young people whose primary need for being looked after arises from emotional or behavioural difficulties. The home is a detached property located in a small town in a semi-rural location. Within 15 miles there are two large cities and the home is located on direct bus routes to other towns and facilities nearby. Each young person has their own bedroom and the home has the usual domestic facilities including a separate education room which can also be used for meetings. There is also a garden at the rear of the property.

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **satisfactory**.

This was the first inspection of the home since it became registered. At the time of the inspection, the home had been caring for young people for approximately 10 weeks.

Despite the recent departure of the registered manager, appropriate staffing arrangements remain in place and an acting manager is operating effectively. The staff team are particularly effective at enabling young people to gain an education, training and employment. All the staff are trained to provide young people with foundation qualifications and the home has a well-stocked education room.

Young people are cared for safely, there is no bullying and young people rarely go absent.

Quality monitoring arrangements are somewhat weak. For example, there is a lack of awareness of the new national minimum standards, legislation and guidance which is now applicable to children's homes. In addition there is a lack of thoroughness when checking employment histories of people seeking to work at the children's home. There are also some shortfalls relating to the recording of sanctions and restraints.

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 that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose which shall include the information required by this regulation (Regulation 17B)	23/05/2011
27 (2001)	ensure full and satisfactory recruitment information is available for each member of staff including a full employment history with a satisfactory written explanation of any gaps in employment (Regulation 26)(3)(d))	30/05/2011
29 (2001)	maintain in the children's home those records required by legislation, in particular a register of staff who are and have been employed at the children's home (Regulation 29 (1))	30/05/2011
34 (2001)	ensure that the system for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 provides for consultation with children accommodated in the home, their parents and placing authorities. (Regulation 34(3))	30/05/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure that a copy of the Children's Homes Regulations and the National Minimum Standards are made permanently available to staff, young people and their families (paragraph 3.15 statutory guidance)
- ensure the staff have appropriate training, supervision and support if they are required to supervise and facilitate contact (NMS 9.2)
- ensure all staff recruited before 1 April 2011 have attained a minimum level three qualification. (NMS 18.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Although the children's home has not been operating long, young people are making sound progress since they started living there. Young people comment in surveys that staff always make sure they go to school or college and help them with school work. The home provides some education in the home while school placements are being arranged. Staff have put into place effective arrangements to enable young people to have good health and they support young people to have regular contact with families. However, the staff have not received training about how to provide effective supervision of contact. This means they are not being fully supported to provide effective supervision if placing authorities require this.

The staff help young people to learn skills which will be helpful to them when they are older and living independently. Young people help to prepare and cook meals and staff help them to budget their spending money. The staff also help young people to benefit from a life skills programme once they have reached the age of 14.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy sound relationships with the acting manager and staff and they get on well with each other. The staff enable and support young people to take part in a range of leisure activities that they are interested in. This includes sports and activities that involve plenty of exercise such as boxing and walks in the country.

The acting manager and staff receive training in how to respond to challenging behaviour. This includes training in how to de-escalate situations and how to restrain young people if their behaviour becomes out of control. Rewards and sanctions are used to encourage appropriate behaviour. However, there is weakened accountability for the use of sanctions and restraints. This is because the recording formats do not comply with legislation as important information is not recorded.

Young people are supported to raise any concerns formally and informally. They know how to raise any concerns about their care. For example, the formal complaints procedures of the home and local placing authorities are displayed on their notice board. Information is also displayed about how to access external agencies such as Childline and an advocacy service. Procedures for handling concerns by people external to the home are somewhat weak because concerns are not responded to in a timely manner. House meetings are held regularly to give young people a say in how the home is run. Each young person also has a key worker and they spend regular one-to-one time with them and any other member of staff as necessary.

The staff are mostly trained to deliver some education to enable young people to gain basic qualifications. There are effective arrangements in place to enable young people to learn reading, writing and arithmetic while arrangements for full time education are being made.

Effective arrangements are in place to ensure young people's health needs are met. The staff help to ensure young people have regular check-ups with health professionals such as a doctors, dentists and opticians. Young people can also receive support from external agencies such as the local child and adolescent mental health service, a youth offending service.

The home is also clean and maintained in a safe condition.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people enjoy good relationships with the staff and staff have not needed to restrain any young person since the home opened.

Young people say they feel safe at the home and there is no bullying. Information is displayed informing young people how to respond if they feel they are being bullied. The acting manager and staff have worked with the local police to create a policy and procedure should any young person go absent from the home. There have been very few incidents since the home opened and the staff are very effective at reducing the frequency of such incidents. The manager and staff regularly assess potential risks to welfare. They have taken appropriate steps to reduce the likelihood and impact of any concerns.

The premises are maintained in a safe condition. Professional technicians regularly service the electrical equipment, gas appliances and equipment for preventing, detecting and extinguishing fires.

The registered persons have a written policy and procedure regarding the recruitment of staff. Those people responsible for recruitment have received relevant training and most of the necessary recruitment checks are undertaken. However, examination of recruitment records showed that not all staff have a written explanation relating to gaps in their employment history. Additionally, dates are sometimes recorded only by the year rather than the month and year.

The staff receive regular training in child protection and they are fully aware of their duty to pass on their concerns about welfare. They also fully understand how to respond appropriately to any allegations, suspicions or evidence of harm.

Leadership and management

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

The children's home has a clearly written Statement of Purpose and children's guide. These documents present useful information for those external to the home as well as for young people themselves.

Ofsted registered the home in December 2010 and in February 2011 it commenced providing care for young people. A few weeks after this the Registered Manager left the home. An acting manager is currently managing the home and the registered provider is actively seeking a permanent replacement.

The staffing levels are appropriate to enable the staff to meet the needs of the young people. The permanent members of staff tend to cover shortfalls in staffing levels and the acting manager and senior staff ensure nobody works excessive hours.

The quantity and quality of training is good. A training plan is in place and this covers important subjects. All new staff undertake appropriate induction training to the standards set by the Children's Workforce Development Council. The senior staff are qualified to level four, however only half of the residential staff have a qualification in care at level three. The staff also receive regular supervision and feel well-supported by their management team.

The arrangements in place to monitor the quality of care are weak. At the time of the inspection there was a lack of awareness that new national minimum standards and legislation were now in force. A copy of the new standards and legislation were not in place. Without knowledge and possession of these documents, monitoring of the quality of care is severely hampered. In addition, the internal monitoring of quality of care does not provide for consultation with young people, parents and social workers. This means shortfalls are less likely to be identified.

The management of the home are simplifying the recording systems in the home in order to enable the staff to spend more time with young people. However, not all the required information is currently being kept at the home. Specifically, a staff register of information about staff currently and previously employed at the home is not in place. This means it will be more difficult if, in the future, a regulatory body such as Ofsted needs to gain ready access to such information.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.