

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC417031
Inspection date	13/06/2012
Inspector	Shaun Common
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	05/12/2011
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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 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**.

Young people's basic health needs are met and they have access to a range of health services to promote their health and well-being. However, their attendance and achievement in education, and plans for them by the provision to support their future employment or education are poor. This has the potential to significantly impact upon young people's prospects. Young people are supported to develop some skills for adulthood; however, this is limited.

Young people have some good relationships with staff, which they benefit from; however, there are inconsistent staff practices, including in behaviour management, which impact upon these relationships and affect young people's care. Young people have some methods of sharing their views about their care, although feel they are not always taken seriously, and there are no formal responses to young people's views. There is no evidence to show that young people's views have influenced the running of the home or how their views have been used to contribute to improvement in the quality of care.

Young people are supported to keep in touch with people important to them and are supported by a qualified staff team with appropriate training and support in place. The home provides a well decorated, furnished and comfortable environment for the young people to live.

Young people say they feel safe. However, a number of practices mean that young people are at risk. When young people go missing, robust action is not taken to ensure they are looked for by staff and fully supported and advised on their return to

the home. Recruitment of staff is mainly a rigorous process, although managers do not undertake checks with all previous employers where the individual has worked with children. This means not all staff may be the right people to work with vulnerable children. Commendably, physical restraint is rarely used; however, records do not show best practice that promotes young people's well-being and rights.

Management and operation of the home are poor. There is some good information for parents, professionals and young people about the home and the services it provides. However, this is not always accurate or up to date. Monitoring systems are not consistent, regularly applied or effective in identifying shortfalls and how the quality of care provided to young people can and should be improved.

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
4 (2001)	ensure that the children's home is at all times conducted in a manner which is consistent with its Statement of Purpose; specifically that the home is able to meet the needs of children that are set out in the statement with staff that are suitably qualified, trained and skilled to meet those defined needs (Regulation 4(6))	13/07/2012
4 (2001)	produce a children's guide to the home which shall include the address and telephone number of the HMCI (Regulation 4(3)(c))	31/08/2012
5 (2001)	keep under review and, where appropriate, revise the children's guide; when revised, supply a copy of the children's guide to each child accommodated in the children's home (Regulation 5(a)(c))	31/08/2012
7 (2001)	give notice to HMCI of the name of the person appointed to manage the children's home and the date on which the appointment is to take effect (Regulation 7(2))	13/07/2012
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of restraint, that a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose, which shall include the matters set out in this regulation; specifically items (a), (c), (e), (f) and (g) (Regulation 17B(3))	13/07/2012
17B (2001)	ensure that where a measure of restraint is used on a child the record must include details of methods used to avoid the need to use that measure (Regulation 17B(4)(b))	13/07/2012
18 (2001)	promote the educational achievement of children; specifically ensure young people are supported to regularly attend school	01/09/2012

	or college, make use of educational facilities and assist young people beyond school leaving age with arrangements for education, training and employment (Regulation 18(1)(3))	
18 (2001)	ensure that children accommodated in the home are encouraged to develop and pursue appropriate leisure pursuits and are provided with appropriate leisure activities (Regulation 18(2))	13/07/2012
24 (2001)	ensure that a written record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of the investigation (Regulation 24(5))	31/08/2012
24 (2001)	supply to the HMCI at HMCI's request a statement containing a summary of any complaints made during the preceding 12 months and the action that was taken; specifically respond in a timely manner to any request made by Ofsted to examine and investigate complaints made (Regulation 24(7))	01/07/2012
26 (2001)	ensure that full and satisfactory information is available in relation to all staff in respect of each of the matters specified in Schedule 2; specifically item 4 of that schedule (Regulation 26(1) and (3))	31/08/2012
28 (2001)	maintain in respect of each child, a record in a permanent form which includes the information specified in Schedule 3; specifically items 10 and 22 of that Schedule (Regulation 28(1))	01/08/2012
33 (2001)	ensure visitors in accordance with this regulation, interview with their consent and in private, such of the children accommodated there, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home as appears necessary in order to form an opinion of the standard of care provided (Regulation 33(4))	01/07/2012
33 (2001)	ensure visitors in accordance with this regulation, robustly inspect records of any complaints (Regulation 33(4)(b))	01/07/2012
34 (2001)	maintain the system for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals and improving the quality of care provided in the children's home; ensure the system provides for consultation with children accommodated in the home, their parents and placing authorities. (Regulation 34(1)(3))	31/07/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure that 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; specifically ensure that young people receive formal feedback about matters they raise in children's meetings (NMS 1.1)
- ensure that there is an environment and culture, to promote models and support

positive behaviour that all staff understand and implement; specifically ensure that staff develop the skills and understanding to develop and sustain consistent positive relationships with all young people accommodated (NMS 3.2)

- ensure that where any sanctions, disciplinary measures or restraint are used, children are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records kept by the home (NMS 3.18)
- ensure the care and support provided to children minimises the risk that they will go missing and reduces the risk of harm should the child go missing; specifically ensure that statutory guidance on children who run away and go missing from home or care is implemented and evidenced as implemented (NMS 5.1)
- ensure children are supported in the matters set out in this standard (NMS 12.1)
- contribute to the development of each child's pathway plan and work collaboratively with young people's social workers in implementing plans; specifically ensure that a review of pathway plans is requested as required and that staff and young people participate in its review, development and implementation (NMS 12.2)
- ensure the children's guide includes, how children can find out about their rights, how a child can contact their Independent Reviewing Officer and the Children's Rights Director and how to secure access to an independent advocate (NMS 13.5)
- ensure there is 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 visits of the home carried out under Regulation 33 include robust relevant checks set out in regulations and guidance and robust checks of any disciplinary measures and use of restraint and records of missing person's reports; specifically ensure any shortfalls are identified and that concerns are raised with the registered person for action (NMS 21.8)
- ensure that children understand, within their level of understanding, the purpose and content of their plan and the reasoning behind any decisions about their care (NMS 25.1)
- ensure each child's plan is monitored by a key worker within the home; specifically ensure that each plan reflects young people's needs and how these needs will be met on a day-to-day basis. (NMS 25.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people's health needs are identified and met. Young people said that they see health professionals when they need to and for routine assessment and treatments. Young people also said that staff provide them with information and advice on health

matters, such as the effects of alcohol, smoking and illicit drug use, and this helps them identify risks and to stay safe and well. However, supporting records kept by the home only show some of the health appointments attended and do not show the work undertaken with young people about health promotion matters. Therefore a full picture of health outcomes for young people is not clear in all cases.

Attendance of young people at formal education provision is either low or young people are excluded. Staff have made attempts to work with relevant professionals so young people have opportunities to re-engage, with some success in one case; however, attendance remains sporadic. In-house programmes of education are available, although young people's participation in these is limited. Young people who are beyond school age do not have a clear plan in place to show how they are being supported to plan for their future education or employment, although they are assisted to engage in some local part-time voluntary work. Due to young people not being engaged effectively in education, or having effective plans for their future, their achievement is affected and disrupted, which will impact upon their future prospects.

There are clear arrangements in place for all young people to have contact with their families and others important to them. Young people are happy with the arrangements in place and they receive support from staff to maintain contact.

Young people are assisted and supported to develop some skills that will help them in the transition to adulthood and independent living. They learn and practice basic skills such as shopping, cooking and cleaning. However, there is not a comprehensive plan to ensure that young people have a broad knowledge and skill base in this area, commensurate with the matters set out in the Children (Leaving Care) Act; for example, a range of financial skills, where to get consumer or legal advice and access to further support and benefits. A pathway plan provided by a local authority is out of date and not relevant to the young person's current circumstances.

Quality of care

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

Young people each have a care plan that sets out some of their assessed needs. However, plans are not specific enough to show the range of needs and how these will be met. Plans focus on daily routines rather than specific needs. Young people said they do not know that plans about their needs exist. Therefore they are not central to planning processes. Cultural, religious and identity needs are identified in plans and met, and staff assist and support young people where appropriate.

There are some good relationships between staff and young people. However, young people say that not all relationships are positive; some are strained and that young people are not always treated fairly.

Young people are able to share their views directly with staff and managers and

through key worker sessions. However, young people feel their views are sometimes not listened to or taken seriously. There are regular young people's meetings where they can have their say about their care and the running of the home. However, the records do not show that the issues raised by young people are considered and acted upon, as there are no formal responses provided. There is no evidence to show that young people's views have influenced the running of the home, or how their views have been used to contribute to improvement in the quality of care.

Young people do not have a good range of activities available which they can enjoy. Young people's views are that there are insufficient and limited activities and at times they are bored. Young people do have access to some activities, such as a local youth club and gym.

There are a range of services, which young people state they have access to if required, which promotes their health and well-being, such as opticians, dentists, doctors and mental health services. Where required, young people receive the medication they need, when they need it, in order to stay fit and well. Medication is stored securely and recorded accurately, which helps to keep young people safe.

There is a complaints procedure and information for young people that enables them to access the home's complaints system. Young people stated they are aware of how to complain, but have rarely needed to use the procedure.

The home is well decorated, furnished and maintained, and provides a good environment conducive to the care of young people.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people stated they feel safe and do not have concerns about their safety. They stated there is no bullying at the home. Staff have a good understanding of how to keep young people safe. They understand and can implement child protection procedures. One child protection concern has arisen since the last inspection and this has been dealt with fully to safeguard young people.

Young people do go missing from the home. There is a missing from home protocol in place and relevant professionals and agencies are notified when such events occur. However, young people are not robustly safeguarded by the home's systems and processes. Staff do not always undertake a search of the local area when young people go missing and parents are not always informed. Records do not reflect that appropriate action has been taken to ascertain the circumstances of the young person going missing or their whereabouts, as well as action taken on their return, to address any problems and reduce the likelihood of a further incident. Young people are not seen by someone independent of the home when they return to offer them support, advice, guidance and to promote their safety and well-being. Matters of best practice set out in government guidance are not followed to robustly safeguard

young people, such as reviewing care plans and risk assessments, and consideration of a multi-agency strategy meeting. A record of one incident in the home that occurred in March 2012 contained no details, and although the acting manager had identified this shortfall, the record has not been rectified.

Management of young people's behaviour is inconsistent. This means young people are not always appropriately supported to develop positive social skills and behaviour. Young people have positive individual behaviour management plans that indicate to staff how best to support, advise and guide young people and how best to manage challenging behaviour. Young people said that they have some good relationships with staff. However, staff do not always provide consistent care to young people and are not always aware or fully briefed about young people's circumstances. For example, they were not always clear whether young people were subject of sanctions or about the circumstances of young people's daily routines. This caused young people distress, disappointment and frustration.

Sanctions used to address young people's behaviour are not sufficiently varied and are not always relevant to the misdemeanour. For example, the use of the supervised spending, where staff supervise young people with any monies, is used significantly. At times the use of this sanction has no relevance to the behaviour presented, such as a young person coming home after the expected time or the use of bad language. The use of sanctions is therefore not always effective in positively shaping a young person's behaviour. The recording of sanctions is not always fully completed or accurate. The effectiveness of the measure does not indicate whether the sanction has had an impact, so that monitoring of such matters can influence and shape positive behaviour management approaches with young people.

Physical restraint is rarely used, however, records are not appropriately kept and do not depict best practice in caring for young people. For example, measures to avoid the use of restraint are not clearly recorded, nor are young people's views. Young people do not have the opportunity to discuss the incident and receive appropriate support and guidance. There is no evidence that young people have had the opportunity to see a health or medical professional after such incidents to ensure they are fit and well. One record does not clearly indicate how a young person was held and this does not promote young people's rights or safety.

New staff have been recruited to work at the home since the last inspection. Recruitment information is mostly in place; however, checks have not been carried out with all employers where an individual has previously worked with children. This means that young people may be at risk from unsuitable people working at the children's home.

Leadership and management

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

Management arrangements are not effective in order that young people benefit from a well-run home. The home has been without a Registered Manager since March

2011. Temporary acting managers have been appointed in that time. A new manager was appointed very recently and has worked at the home for approximately two weeks. Ofsted is yet to receive notification that a manager has been appointed, when this came into effect, or an application for registration.

The Statement of Purpose contains some good information for parents, placing authorities and others about the home and the services it provides, and what young people can expect. However, the document claims the home can provide for young people with wide-ranging needs. However, the staff team are not skilled, trained or qualified to meet such needs. For example, the home states it can provide for young people with post-traumatic stress disorder, bi-polar personality disorder, and various forms of psychosis. The document also states a previous acting manager was registered with Ofsted, when no registration had been carried out with this individual.

Young people are provided with a children's guide to the home, which contains some good information for them. It describes what the home sets out to do and what young people can expect. The document is in a suitable format for young people. The document is however, not up to date and therefore not always helpful to young people. For example, it contains incorrect contact details for Ofsted and does not contain details of how young people can contact the Children's Rights Director or their Independent Reviewing Officer for support and advice.

The home has a sufficient number of staff to care for young people. Staff have relevant qualifications and have undertaken a range of suitable training that assists them to deliver appropriate care to young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties. Staff feel they are well supported to deliver care to young people.

Complaints and concerns from the local community that have arisen since the last inspection have not been addressed effectively or efficiently by managers. Complaints records do not show that matters have been investigated thoroughly. They do not detail the process followed and how, and if, matters have been robustly addressed and resolved. The provider was asked recently by Ofsted to look into complaints raised and the provider has not provided a formal response to show the home deals with any concerns quickly and robustly for the benefit of young people.

External monitoring visits to assess the quality of care of the home are undertaken monthly by a senior manager of the organisation. The monitoring that takes place is not effective and young people are only cursorily consulted during these visits. The wording of reports is almost identical so they lack individualism, and shortfalls that affect the quality of care provided to young people are not identified; for example, shortfalls in the recording of the use of restraint, the imposition of sanctions and complaints. Monitoring does not therefore assist the manager to improve the quality of care provided to young people.

Internal monitoring of the home is very poor. There has only been one report completed in the last 12 months of any monitoring of the quality of care provided to young people. The one report available does not sufficiently assess or detail the

quality of care provided, and where the home can improve the care of young people. There is no consultation with young people, parents and placing authorities as part of this monitoring process, in order to effectively use these views to improve service delivery.

There is no development plan for the home that sets out the future of the home, planned changes and developments and areas for improvement that will benefit young people and improve their quality of care.

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.