

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	08/10/2013
Inspector	Stella Henderson
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Provision subtype	Children's home

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Service information

Brief description of the service

This privately owned home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to five young people with emotional and/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 **adequate**.

Young people make some measurable progress during their time at the home. Care planning effectively addresses young people's basic needs. Young people are safe within the environs of the home. They have generally cordial relations with each other and staff. They say they feel safe here.

The quality of the relationships between young people and staff is a strength of the home. This enables young people to feel valued and begin to gain a sense of positive self-esteem. Staff receive regular training. They feel these learning opportunities are relevant to their work with young people.

A number of shortfalls are identified. These do not currently have a direct negative impact on the welfare or safety of young people. However they do limit young people's chances to achieve optimum outcomes.

For example, the Registered Manager, who is also the Responsible Individual, does not have a good understanding of where performance and practice needs to improve. Monitoring activities are not robust and statutory reporting procedures are not always followed. The home does not always fully implement its own policies. There is inconsistent application of the regulatory framework and national minimum standards.

Requirements and recommendations are set to enable the registered manager to improve practice and thereby outcomes for young people.

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 in a children's home a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose which shall include points (a) to (i) and 4 (a) to (b) (Regulation 17B)(3)(a - i) 4(a)(b)	11/11/2013
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)	11/11/2013
30 (2001)	ensure that if any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 5 takes place, the registered person shall without delay notify the persons indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of the table (Regulation 30)(1)	11/11/2013
34 (2001)	monitor the matters set out in Schedule 6 and improve the quality of care provided in the children's home. Ensure 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)(a)(b)3	11/11/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure that all young people communicate their views on all aspects of their care and support. This is specifically in relation to placement planning (NMS 1.3)
- improve strategies for managing risks faced by young people. Ensure this strategy is recorded in detail and revised so that it includes the actions to be taken by the children's home to contribute to the strategy and manage the risk (Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations)(Volume 5)(2.83)
- review and amend the aims and objectives of the Statement of Purpose (NMS 13.3)
- ensure the overall number, competence and deployment of staff can fulfil the home's Statement of Purpose and meet the individual needs of all children resident in the home (NMS 17.1)
- ensure all staff's work is consistent with these Regulations and the National Minimum Standards, the homes' policies and procedures. (NMS 21.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **adequate**.

Although not all young people feel that their lives have changed for the better, they have made some progress during their time at the home.

For example, health outcomes are improved through better medical attention, increased exercise and good diet. As a result young people's health is generally good, including their dental health. One placing social worker noted that a young person who was frightened of the dentist was supported with appointments. Young people are encouraged to enjoy a healthy lifestyle which includes strenuous sports such as horse-riding and playing rugby. This also enables young people to engage positively with the wider community.

Some young people are now in full time education for the first time or have successfully embarked on training courses. So far there is excellent attendance and engagement but it is too early to demonstrate achievement in these areas. It is too early to say what the eventual educational outcomes will be. However these small steps clearly give young people a sense of achievement and boost to their self-esteem.

Young people's identity and positive self-view are also reinforced through contact with family and friendship networks. Friends and family are free to visit them in the home. Young people's views on contact with their families is taken into account, and this is an area of improvement for some young people. They also have their opinions on everyday matters listened to, such as the choice of food, decoration and holiday plans.

Young people acquire skills to help them do things independently, particularly cooking, to prepare for their adult lives. Young people say that staff do a lot for them, but recognise that with support they can learn to do things for themselves and cope with independence.

Quality of care

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

Care planning is adequate, ensuring that young people's basic needs are identified and met. Staff successfully implement all elements of the care planning process, such as providing reports for statutory reviews and updating placement plans. This ensures that young people have access to the resources, services and interventions that they require, particularly where health, education and leisure needs are concerned.

Young people's cultural and religious needs are also clearly identified. The team is

balanced in terms of age, ethnicity and gender so these models of diversity are also reinforced for young people. Planning for admission is effective. Young people say they had chance to visit the home before admission and were made to feel welcome. This gives young people an opportunity to fully engage with the home and to quickly settle there.

Young people have a lot to say for themselves. They say they are confident about discussing concerns with the manager and staff and know how to make a formal complaint. However their views do not find their way into placement planning and risk assessment processes. This means that new or better ways of doing things may be overlooked.

Staff encourage young people to enjoy their leisure time. Activities outside of the home are planned and young people also make their own arrangements with friends. Young people find there is enough to do in the home when they are there. They like to bake, do art work and play board games. This helps young people to learn how to use their spare time constructively.

Young people live in a home that is spacious and suitably maintained. Work is in hand to repair and refurbish a fire-damaged room, but this does not interfere with young people's comfort and access to the rest of the home.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say they feel safe at the home. They identify individuals who they would speak to if they were unhappy or felt unsafe, including Ofsted. Staff recognise the potential for peer domination and risks of bullying. They work hard to address any problems before they become complaints. This means minor grumbles are addressed and harmony in the home is generally maintained.

Young people come to the home with high levels of risk-taking behaviours. Some continue to put themselves at risk by going missing from the home. These incidents are responded to promptly and are gradually reducing. The home works well with other agencies to ensure the safe return home of individuals, particularly the local police. One placing social worker noted that 'the missing from home protocol was followed when the young person had an unauthorised absence.'

The manager reviews strategies to minimise such risks. However these are not always undertaken in a timely or robust manner. This means that opportunities to reduce risk for young people more quickly and effectively are missed.

Good behaviour is promoted through support, praise and a token economy. Physical intervention is used in a proportionate way. However such interventions are not fully recorded as required by the Children's Home regulations. This means that young people's views and the effectiveness of such measures are not always documented.

Young people are protected by staff carefully checking prescriptions to ensure they receive the correct dosage of medication. Records are accurately kept which provides an effective audit trail.

Young people live in a home where safety is monitored by a system of internal checks and risk assessments. Fire alarm tests and fire drills are carried out regularly and have recently been proved effective in practice.

Leadership and management

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

Young people live a home where staff report that they feel adequately supported by relevant training, supervision, annual appraisals and staff meetings. This enables young people make some progress during their time at the home.

The Registered Manager is supported by a deputy manager and well-established staff team. However, some responsibilities that require the Registered Manager's attention have fallen short due to the added responsibilities of being the Responsible Individual. This means that at times leadership and management of the home are not effective and have resulted in a number of shortfalls in practice and compliance.

External scrutiny of the service is not required. Internal monitoring is not sufficiently robust however to ensure compliance with the regulations or national minimum standards. The process does not identify deficits in practice or evaluate the quality of care received by young people. It does not draw on the opinions and views of young people, their parents or stakeholders. This means opportunities to drive forward improvement for young people is diminished.

Notifications have not been sent to Ofsted as required. This prevents the regulator from assessing the home's response to serious incidents and ensuring that young people are safe.

Complaints from external sources are noted, but not the response or action taken to remedy the situation. Young people and professionals cannot be assured therefore that lessons are learned from the findings of complaints.

Staffing is generally sufficient to meet the needs of young people. However on one occasion staffing levels were not sufficient. Although this was only for a very short period of time, this put staff in a vulnerable situation.

The manager does not ensure that staff fully implement the home's policies. For example, although a room search was undertaken for legitimate reasons, this had not been discussed with the young person concerned. This excludes young people from the process and the opportunity for them to give their opinion.

The home works to the objectives of it's Statement of Purpose but some of the content is not accurate. For example, it states that the home offers art therapy, but no qualified art therapist is employed at the home. This may create confusion for

young people, their parents and commissioners of the service.

Recommendations raised at the last inspection have been met. Lines of accountability are now better defined in the home's child protection procedures. Contingency plans in the event of an allegation against the manager have also been addressed in that document. This makes clear to young people and others what they can expect in such situations.

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.