

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Katarina Djordjevic
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Date of last inspection	26/01/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to two children who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home is owned by the local authority.

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**.

The level of care provided to young people is inadequate because not all young people are happy and feel safe in the home; and behaviour management policies have not been effectively implemented. This has resulted in some young people not being protected from the risk of harm. Young people receive care and support from a stable staff team who are very caring and nurturing; staff work hard to try and meet the needs of all young people. However, outcomes for young people are variable. Some young people make good progress during their time at the home which helps them prepare for the next stages of their lives. However, this is not the case for all young people as some make very little progress.

Some young people's psychological, cognitive and behavioural needs are not always assessed in a timely manner.. As a result, staff have been unable to manage some young people's complex behaviour.

Working closely with a range of other professionals is embedded in the day-to-day practice of the home which helps to protect young people from the risk of harm and abuse. However, some young people's welfare has not been adequately protected due to poor and unsafe restraint practices.

Since the last inspection a new Registered Manager has been appointed. However, a lack of clear, robust and effective management of the home has resulted in a failure to identify shortfalls in practices. For example recording of important information in certain areas is inadequate. This makes it difficult to accurately assess if poor and, sometimes unsafe practices, have been dealt with appropriately. As a result, young people are not always adequately protected from the risk of harm.

There are a significant number of areas for improvements to ensure that all of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the national minimum standards are met. These relate to the management of the home; safeguarding young people; management monitoring systems and record keeping.

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 (Regulation 4 (5))	23/10/2012
11 (2001)	make proper provision for the care, education, supervision, and where appropriate, treatment of young people (Regulation 11 (1) (b))	23/10/2012
17B (2001)	prepare and implement a written behaviour management policy with reference to ensuring staff practice is in line with the policy on physical intervention; and the means whereby appropriate behaviour is to be promoted (Regulation 17B (1) (a) (b)) *	23/10/2012
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline, a written record is made which shall include a description of the measure used. This is with specific reference to ensuring records of restraint give clear details of the actual restraint used and who is involved in the actual restraint (Regulation 17B (3) (c) (e))	23/10/2012
17 (2001)	ensure no measure of control or discipline is excessive, unreasonable or contrary to paragraph (2) with specific reference to ensuring financial sanctions imposed by way of reparation are not excessive and leave young people with a realistic amount of pocket money each week to spend (Regulation 17 (1))	23/10/2012
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))	23/10/2012
30 (2001)	shall without delay notify the persons indicated in column 2 of the table any of the events listed in column 1 of the table. This is with specific reference to notifying Ofsted of all serious incidents necessitating calling the police to the home and serious complaints made against staff (Regulation 30 (1))	23/10/2012
9	manage the home with sufficient care, competence and skill	23/10/2012

(2001)	having regard to the size of the children's home, its statement of purpose, and the number and needs of the young people accommodated (Regulation 9 (1))	
28 (2001)	maintain in respect of each young person who is accommodated in a children's home a record in permanent form which includes the information, documents and records specified in schedule 3 relating to the young person; and is kept up to date. This is with specific reference to ensuring records are completed in a timely manner and accurately reflect events (Regulation 28 (1) (a) (b))	23/10/2012
34 (2001)	ensure that the registered person shall establish a system improving the quality of care provided in the children's home (Regulation 34(1)(b))	23/10/2012
33 (2001)	shall inspect the premises and records of complaints with specific reference to ensuring shortfalls are identified and appropriate actions taken. (Regulation 33 (4) (b))	23/10/2012

*These requirements are subject to a compliance notice

Recommendations

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

- ensure restraint is not used to force compliance with instructions where significant harm or serious damage to property are not otherwise likely (NMS 3.14)
- provide documentary evidence to demonstrate that incidents of challenging behaviour are regularly reviewed to enable staff to reflect and learn to inform future practice (NMS 3.21)
- ensure there is an effective system for monitoring the quality and frequency of record keeping and take action when needed (NMS 22.1)
- ensure sharing of information about young people with relevant agencies is accurate. (NMS 22.7)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Some young people make real progress in attending educational provisions based on their individual needs. With the support and encouragement of staff, young people have learnt the importance of education and have shown resilience in attending school. As a result, their attendance has improved greatly; they have finished school and are now attending college. Discussions with some young people demonstrated how proud they are of their achievements in this area. Progress made has not only improved young people's life chances but also increased their aspirations in life and

their confidence has grown. Although staff work hard to encourage all young people to engage in education, some young people are not engaging at all in education. This prevents them achieving their full academic potential and their future life chances.

Some young people's behaviour improves during their time at the home. This has enabled them to have more free time as they have made good progress in learning how to keep themselves safe. Furthermore, they have acquired independence skills in preparation for adulthood in terms of being able to use public transport and accessing community resources. Young people said they were pleased with how well they had progressed in becoming more independent. The reduction of the number of incidents of young people going missing has helped to reduce the risk of harm and abuse to young people. However, some young people are not making any progress in changing their complex and challenging behaviours, despite the best efforts of staff. Feedback from placing authorities recognise that staff are working very hard to try and manage some young people's challenging behaviour but that progress is very slow for some young people.

Young people are supported by staff to maintain contact with their family and friends. As a result, young people are able to increase their contact, and in some cases, improve their relationships with their families. Young people appreciate the support they have had from staff and they are happy that they are able to visit their families more often.

Young people are able to acquire skills in preparation for adulthood. As part of the plan for leaving care, young people embark on a semi-independence programme which is tailored to their individual needs. As well as being expected to do their own cooking, cleaning and laundry, young people are given their own budgets to manage. This enables them to learn about financial management and menu planning; they also learn about budgeting for household bills as well as how to access a range of resources and agencies.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy good relationships with staff which enables them to raise any concerns they may have. There are a range of systems which enable young people to have a say in the day-to-day running of the home as well as their future. For example, regular key work sessions are held with individuals and young people's house meetings also take place. This helps young people to feel listened to and helps to improve their self-confidence. However, young people do not enjoy positive relationships with each other. This is because the behaviour of some young people impacts greatly on others. Some young people are frustrated by the behaviours of others and they are finding it difficult to continue living at the home. Some young people have requested to move out of the home into independent living sooner than was planned.

Each young person has a care plan (known as a residential action plan), risk assessments and associated records which give details of the needs young people and how to meet their needs. These records are regularly reviewed and updated when required. Although care plans give details of young people's presenting needs, it is unclear for some young people if care plans truly reflect their holistic needs as appropriate assessments have not been carried out. For example, behavioural and cognitive assessments have not yet been undertaken for some young people. This makes it difficult for staff to help young people make progress.

Young people live in an environment where their physical, emotional, sexual and psychological health is promoted. On admission all young people are promptly registered with the local health professionals as well as specialist health services. This helps to ensure their individual health needs are being met. Staff work very closely with other health professionals including therapeutic services to try and meet young people's psychological and emotional needs.

Young people live in a homely and comfortable environment. The house is a mid-terraced house and located in a city. The home is decorated and furnished to a good standard. Each young person has their own bedroom which they are happy with. They are supported to personalise which helps to reflect their individual identities and personalities.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are not adequately protected from the risk of harm, abuse and injury. There are a range of safeguarding policies within the home including: child protection; behaviour management; missing from care and health and safety. Staff receive training in these areas. However, this inspection has identified some significant shortfalls in the implementation of behaviour management policies which have placed young people at risk of harm. Staff say that they are finding it difficult to manage some young people's behaviour. This is evident in the recent increase in the number of restraints. Some restraints have not been in line with the approved methods and on one occasion restraint has been used to force compliance. This has potentially placed both young people and staff at risk of harm and injury. In some cases, injuries have been sustained by both young people and staff as a result of young people being restrained. Recording of restraints is poor and does not always correspond with details in other records such as significant event forms and notification forms. This makes it difficult to accurately assess what actually happened and if behaviour is being managed appropriately.

Additionally, management monitoring systems have failed to identify these shortfalls. Sanctions are imposed for unacceptable behaviours; most sanctions imposed are for financial reparation. However, these are ineffective as there is no improvement in some young people's behaviour. Additionally, sanctions may be counter-productive as some young people have very little pocket money left each week as most of it is

being paid back by way of reparation.

The behaviour of some young people has resulted in a large number of complaints from neighbours. Although staff have tried to deal with these and generally have good relationships with neighbours, outcomes are not positive as young people's behaviour is not improving. Although staff work very closely with other agencies to try and protect young people from the risk of harm, outcomes for some young people are poor. They do not make progress in changing their socially unacceptable and risk taking behaviours. Furthermore, information that is presented to multi-agency strategy meetings is not always accurate. For example, at a strategy meeting information about the number of times a young person went missing during a certain period was incorrect. This has the potential to affect the planning of future care and strategies to reduce risks to young people and meet their needs appropriately.

Young people are able to raise any concerns they may have and some young people have accessed the complaints procedure. However, records of complaints are poor. They do not give details of actions taken as part of the investigation and do not give clear details of the outcome or, if the young person is satisfied with the outcome. This potentially places young people at risk of harm.

Procedures and practices relating to young people going missing are robust and help to further protect young people from the risk of harm. Young people, who have put themselves at risk in the past due to frequently going missing, make progress in this area. The numbers of incidents of them going missing have reduced since their admission.

The management of health and safety helps to protect young people and staff from the risk of harm and injury. This can be attributed to the regular servicing of equipment; weekly fire alarm tests and regular fire drills. The home's fire risk assessment does not include risks presented by individual's behaviour or their reluctance to engage in fire safety procedures. However, individual risk assessments give details of when young people refuse to take part in fire drills and where there are issues regarding fire setting. Staff are proactive in contacting officers from the local fire authority who visit the home to try and work with young people. Where young people are reluctant to engage with the fire officers, resources are available for staff to use with young people during house meetings and individual key working sessions.

No new staff have been recruited since the last inspection and there have been no changes to recruitment practices.

Leadership and management

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

The home has a detailed Statement of Purpose which informs young people parents, carers and placing authorities about what to expect. Practice in the home is not in line with the Statement of Purpose in some important areas. For example, the

home's complaints procedures are not effectively implemented which places young people at risk.

The quality of care provided varies due to a lack of appropriate assessment of some young people's needs. . The staff team have many years of experience and are committed to improving the lives of young people. Young people benefit from the care of a diverse staff team with regards to gender, race and ethnicity. As a result, some young people make good progress during their time at the home and are able to learn from a range of others' experiences. However, some young people are making very little progress. Staff acknowledge that they are finding it difficult to manage some young people's complex and extremely challenging behaviours effectively. This is preventing any meaningful work being undertaken with some young people.

Young people receive care and support from a staff team who want the best for young people. Staff say they are well supported by the Registered Manager and there is always management support via the on-call system. Staff receive regular supervision. This gives staff the opportunity to discuss the provision of care for young people; any difficulties they may have in meeting young people's needs as well as their own professional development. This helps to promote the welfare of young people and helps in trying to protect them from the risk of harm. Although lone working is quite common practice and risk assessments are in place; staffing is flexible and dependent on the needs of young people.

At the last inspection one requirement was made to appoint a new manager and submit an application to register to Ofsted. This has been addressed.

The Registered Manager is not managing the home effectively and this is placing some young people at risk of harm. Internal monitoring systems are ineffective and not sufficiently robust in identifying shortfalls in practice. A lack of recording of essential information has made it difficult, in some cases, to assess if the Registered Manager has dealt with issues appropriately. Monthly monitoring visits are undertaken by representatives of the local authority as required and reports produced. However, these visits have also failed to identify shortfalls in the implementation of the home's behaviour management and complaints policies.

There is a system to notify appropriate authorities of all significant events relating to the protection of young people living at the home. However, this system is not always implemented effectively which does not fully promote young people's well-being and protect them from the risk of harm. Furthermore, Ofsted is not always notified of significant events as required. For example, Ofsted is not always notified when a complaint is made against a staff member. This prevents appropriate monitoring by Ofsted to ensure young people are adequately protected from the risk of harm.

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.