

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Katarina Djordjevic
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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

The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to two children aged between 10 years and 17 years old who have emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Overall effectiveness

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

This is the first inspection since the home was registered in February 2011. Young people receive a satisfactory level of care which mostly takes into account their holistic needs. Young people are very happy living at the home and enjoy positive relationships with staff. Young people make progress in some areas during their time at the home. This is particularly evident in attendance in education for some young people and behaviour. Comments received from social workers support this.

The Registered Manager manages two homes and the day-to-day running of the home is managed by the Assistant Unit Manager. There is a stable staff team who have worked for the local authority for many years. They receive a range of training which helps them to meet the needs of young people. There are systems in place which help to promote the welfare of young people. However, systems are not always effectively implemented in line with the home's policies and procedures. For example, young people's care plans are not always updated when there has been a change in needs and they do not always cover all the identified needs including interests and hobbies of young people. This has the potential to hinder young people's ability to achieve their potential and enjoy life. Internal monitoring systems are not always identifying shortfalls in practice. While there is no evidence to suggest these shortfalls have impacted on young people, they do have the potential to prevent staff from safeguarding young people and enabling young people to grow, develop and achieve their potential. Outcomes for young people could be much improved if staff implemented the home's policies and procedures effectively and the management monitoring systems were more robust. The Registered Manager needs to take a more active part in the day-to-day management of the home.

There are areas for improvement regarding some aspects of recruitment practices; the management of medication; care planning and reviewing of care plans; recording of sanctions and the management of the home including internal monitoring practices within the home.

Areas for improvementStatutory 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
9 (2001)	ensure the Registered Manager manages the home with sufficient care, competence and skill (Regulation 9 (1))	21/11/2011
34 (2001)	maintain an effective quality assurance system (Regulation 34 (1))	21/11/2011
26 (2001)	ensure all recruitment checks as detailed in Schedule 2 are carried out with particular reference to obtaining: a full employment history, together with a satisfactory written explanation of any gaps in employment (Regulation 26)	21/11/2011
21 (2001)	make suitable arrangement for the recording, handling, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of any medicines received (Regulation 21 (1))	31/10/2011
11 (2001)	make proper provision for the care, education and supervisions of young people. (Regulation 11 (1) (a))	31/10/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure practice in the home is in line with the Statement of Purpose (NMS 13)
- improve the recording of sanctions (NMS 3)
- ensure care plans include all identified needs and that they are updated when there is a change in need and reviewed in line with the home's policy. (NMS 25)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are very happy living at the home and commented that they 'love the home'. One young person said that it was the best place they had lived in during their time in care so far. Young people feel safe being at the home and that they are protected from being bullied. Open relationships exist between young people and staff which helps young people raise any concerns they may have. Young people know how to complain and feel listened to. This helps to protect young people from the risk of harm.

Young people make progress during their time at the home and this is confirmed by

social workers. Young people are able to change some of their behaviours which place them at risk. This is particularly noticeable in the reduction of the number of incidents of absconding. However, not all young people are given the appropriate support based on their needs and individual circumstances. Some young people are not presented with opportunities to grow and develop their particular interests and talents. The ethos of the home is on enabling young people to prepare for adulthood and take responsibility for their day-to-day lives. However, this is not always based on adequate risk assessments and does not always take into account the young person's current needs. Effectively young people are not always given enough support and guidance in preparing for adulthood.

Young people are actively encouraged to make everyday choices and take control of their lives wherever and, as much as, possible. This helps to build up trust and young people feel valued. Young people have regular input into the menus and they are involved in producing their weekly education and activity planners. Young people also attend their review meetings which enables them to have a say in their future plans.

Some young people are supported and actively encouraged by staff to re-engage in education where they have been out of education for some time. As a result, some young people enjoy good attendance at educational provisions which enables them to make progress and improve their levels of qualifications. This can be attributed to the support and encouragement of staff. However, this is not consistent for all young people and some young people are not engaged in any form of education or training. This prevents them from achieving their full potential not only academically but in preparation for adult life.

Quality of care

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

Care plans and risk assessments are in place and vary in quality. Some young people's care plans and associated records give details of their holistic needs, likes and hobbies. However, some young people's care plans do not adequately cover important areas such as education and preparing for further education or employment. Care plans do not always include details of young people's interests, talents and achievements which prevent young people from reaching their full potential in areas they clearly enjoy and are good at. Contact arrangements are not clearly documented in young people's records. Care plans are not always signed by the author and young person. Furthermore, care plans are not always updated when there has been a change in need or reviewed in line with the home's policy and procedure. This potentially prevents staff providing care and support to young people based on their current needs. Monitoring systems have failed to identify these shortfalls.

Young people's health is actively promoted and staff work closely with other agencies. Young people are encouraged to take responsibility for their health in preparation for adulthood. However, in some instances it is clear that some young

people need more support and encouragement than they are receiving.

Medication practices at the home are not in line with policy and procedure and potentially compromise young people's health and safety. Medication administration records are not completed as required; where medication is not given, relevant codes are not used to record the reason. Records of medication disposed of do not give the quantity of medication disposed of and how it is disposed of. Where young people self-administer medication, there is no written risk assessment. Furthermore, where mistakes are made with the administration of medication, prompt and appropriate action is not taken. In the one instance where this happened, there was no harm suffered by the young person. Medication is stored in a locked cabinet and during the inspection it was noted that the keys were left in the cabinet lock. Management monitoring systems have failed to identify these shortfalls.

Young people live in a homely environment which meets their needs and enables them to develop different skills and enjoy the facilities of the home. They enjoy accommodation which is decorated and furnished to a very good standard. The house is a mid-terraced house and located in a city. Each young person has their own bedroom and there are gardens at the front and rear. There are local facilities nearby. The home is safe and secure as a result of the effective management of health and safety. Young people are supported to increase their independence skills in preparation for adulthood which they thoroughly enjoy.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Staff work with young people to enable them to learn how to keep themselves safe including how to change their behaviours. Staff present as positive role models and work positively with young people recognising and rewarding good behaviour. Restraint has not been used since the home opened in February 2011 and sanctions are not often used. Records of sanctions do not always give clear details of what the actual behaviour was and how much money is being paid back in reparations. This makes it difficult to monitor if sanctions are appropriate and effective. Additionally, in one instance there was a delay in imposing a sanction and there was no written explanation for this. Where there have been significant incidents, staff do not always follow up agreed actions and the internal monitoring systems have failed to identify this. For example, on one occasion the lone working agreement was not discussed in a staff meeting or reviewed which was an action in the significant event report form.

Staff receive child protection training and are aware of their responsibilities to report any safeguarding concerns. This helps to protect young people from the risk of harm. There is a clear system in place which staff implement to notify appropriate authorities of all significant events relating to the protection of young people living at the home. This helps to further promote young people's well-being and protect them from harm. However, minutes from child protection strategy meetings are not always kept on file. Discussions with the Registered Manager identified that minutes from a

Strategy meeting held in April 2011 had not been typed. Although notes were taken by staff from the home, there was no evidence that the Registered Manager had pursued obtaining the minutes until the inspector asked about the minutes. This potentially compromises young people's safety.

There are clear procedures to follow based on individual needs and risks, in the event of a young person going missing. Staff implement procedures effectively which helps to protect young people from the risk of harm. The home has a copy of the local 'Missing from Care' protocol and staff work closely with the local police.

The management of health and safety at the home is good and helps to protect young people from the risk of harm and injury. This can be attributed to the effective implementation of clear health and safety policies and procedures; staff training; regular servicing and maintenance of equipment. Staff receive fire safety training and the fire evacuation procedure is explained to young people on admission. Regular checks of the fire alarm system and fire drills are carried out.

There are clear recruitment policies and procedures. However, these are not always effectively implemented which potentially leaves young people at risk of harm. There is no documentary evidence to support the fact that any gaps in employment history are explored. The Registered Manager is not always part of the interview process and where this is the case, systems are not robust enough to ensure the Registered Manager is clear that appropriate checks have been carried out. Consequently, the Registered Manager is not always aware of shortfalls in practice.

Leadership and management

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

There is a clear Statement of Purpose which outlines the aims and objectives of the home and the services provided. However, this inspection has identified that practice is not always in line with details in the Statement of Purpose. This includes a lack of information regarding emergency admissions to the home; internal review meetings do not consistently take place and there is no notice board with contact details of advocacy services and other external agencies who may support young people. There is a 'Welcome pack' which is given to young people on admission to the home. This informs young people about services provided; what to expect; routine, rules and boundaries; staffing and details of the complaints procedure including other agencies such as Ofsted and those independent organisations that can provide support and guidance to young people.

Young people receive a satisfactory level of care from a stable staff team who have worked together for many years. Staffing levels are based on young people's needs. Staff feel well supported, receive regular supervision and a range of training which generally enables them to meet the diverse needs of young people.

There is a clear management structure within the home. However, the Registered Manager is not adequately involved in the day-to-day running of the home. This was

evident throughout this inspection by the number of shortfalls in practice identified and a lack of awareness by the Registered Manager that policies and procedures are not being appropriately implemented. The Registered Manager has not attended a staff meeting since the home was registered. There are internal monitoring systems which are carried out by the Registered Manager and the Assistant Unit Manager. However, these are not sufficiently robust to identify shortfalls and to make improvements in the quality of care provided. Regulation 33 visits take place as required and reports produced.

Equality and diversity practice is **satisfactory**.