

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Maire Atherton
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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 service is run by a national provider. The home is registered to provide medium to long term care for up to three young people of either sex with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Young people living in the home attend a school also run by the national provider and have access to in-house therapeutic support.

The registered provider bases its practices on the integration of home, education and therapeutic services working together to meet the needs of the child.

Overall effectiveness

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

The staff team are committed to meeting the clearly identified individual needs of the young people placed and this is recognised by the range of professionals involved with the home. Some, but not all, young people respond positively to the calm, caring and measured approach adopted by the staff team. Some young people have settled and made good progress in the home; others, influenced by factors outside the home, continue to display highly challenging behaviour that puts themselves and others at risk despite the best endeavours of staff.

Young people's health care needs are met well. Education is valued and staff support young people to achieve. Young people are positively encouraged to make their views known about their care plans and their experience of life in the home.

The home has a new staff team in place. The team are getting to know each other with support from management through supervision, team meetings (both of which are not sufficiently frequent in the light of events in the home) and training. There are good systems in place to monitor the quality of care in the home and the staff reflect on practice with a view to improve.

The inspection has identified eight areas for improvement, the majority of which relate to records, which do not significantly impact on outcomes for young people.

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
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26 (2001)	ensure that full and satisfactory information is available in relation to staff employed in the home in accordance with Regulation 26 (3)(d)	31/10/2011
23 (2001)	review the locks on bathroom and other doors to ensure that they can be opened in the event of an emergency and ensure risk assessments cover all aspects of hazardous behaviour outlined in placement plans (Regulation 23 (a))	30/09/2011
29 (2001)	ensure an accurate record is maintained of the actual rosters worked (Regulation 29 (1) Schedule 4 (11))	30/09/2011
29 (2001)	ensure that a central record of accidents is held in the home (Regulation 29 (1) Schedule 4 (4))	30/09/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure that information recorded the health care plan is accurate and implemented in practice (NMS 6.5)
- ensure that updated placement plans are accessible and that the outcomes of reviews and planning meetings are recorded on the young person's file (NMS 25.8)
- ensure that the range of needs of other young people is taken into account when making a placement, including the timing of the admission (Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations, Volume 5 : paragraph 2.2)
- ensure that staff are supported and guided to fulfil their roles (NMS19)
- provide additional IT equipment so that staff can complete records within required timescales (NMS 22).

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people receive individual support that provides them with opportunities to grow and develop. Some young people positively embrace these opportunities and have settled and made significant progress in the short time the home has been open. A young person said: 'When I came here I felt unloved and unwanted, now I feel loved and am treated with respect'. Others have struggled to use the opportunities offered. A social worker commented: 'the staff team could not have done any more in their work with the young person and have got the measure of her. The pattern of behaviour was established prior to admission'. Another professional was highly complimentary about the progress made in stabilising and engaging with a young person placed.

Young people's physical and mental health is promoted by routine and as required health care appointments. There is clear information about the therapy that may be used in the home and staff implement the external input for young people, underpinned by additional training where this is required. The information in health care plans is not always consistent with reported practice, for example allergy information.

Meal times are social occasions and young people enjoy freshly prepared food that is balanced and nutritious. Young people also have opportunities to participate in the planning, shopping and preparation. One young person was very proud of the chicken curry she had prepared, particularly as she had used chicken left from the roast dinner.

Young people receive constructive assistance and guidance that promotes their education at the right level for each individual. This has included work experience at a local tourist attraction, enrolment at college and funding to support home tuition. Young people enjoy participating in a range of activities, such as horse riding, bowling, cinema trips and swimming. One young person said: 'if you want to do something staff will do their best to help you do it'. Staff encourage young people to contribute to household chores and work with them to enable them to develop and maintain personal care and practical independence skills.

Staff work with young people to plan and achieve patterns of contact in accordance with their placement plans.

Quality of care

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

The home has been open a short time and some positive relationships have been established. Staff have been faced with some exceptionally difficult behaviour and are working towards developing strategies with young people to support them in managing the emotions that lead to very risky behaviour. Placement plans and behaviour management support plans reflect individual needs. These are updated in response to changing needs and behaviour but are not easily accessible in each case. Young people's views are asked for and acted upon, and the staffing levels provide each young person with frequent opportunities for one-to-one discussions on a daily basis. Young people know how to complain and say that any complaints they make are taken seriously.

Young people are provided with ample opportunities to access the routine and specialist health care appointments they need. Young people may refuse to attend these appointments and staff ensure that clear information is recorded and new appointments made. Medication is well managed and each young person has written consent forms in place so that members of staff may administer medication or first aid where this is necessary.

The home is located in a rural area with access to public transport links. The house is set back from a busy main road and has extensive gardens. There is ample communal accommodation which means that several activities can take place at the same time. There is a self contained therapy suite in the garden. The house is well maintained and provides young people with comfortable accommodation. Bedroom doors are fitted with monitoring devices for which written consent is in place.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Staff are caring, consistent, calm and non-judgemental in their interactions and approach to young people in the face of highly challenging and difficult behaviour. Staff rarely use sanctions or physical interventions and demonstrate a clear understanding of the distress of individuals that underlies the behaviour. Physical interventions are carefully considered and only used to safeguard young people in accordance with the approved behaviour management method used in the home. One young person described the staff as 'lovely people'. A range of visitors to the home have also been impressed with the attitude and response of staff to young people in charged and demanding situations. However, despite the attitude and response of staff, young people continue to make themselves extremely vulnerable and place themselves and others at considerable risk. The manager and staff team are working closely with placing authorities, other professionals and, where possible, the young people and their families, to determine the way forward to safeguard young people in response to the identified risks. Allegations of harm are appropriately responded to and show that any allegation by a young person is taken seriously as well as supporting the person who is the subject of the allegation.

There are agreed arrangements in place which are implemented in practice in the event of young people going missing. The staff team have established effective communication with the local police and are working within a risk assessed framework. Staff records of incidents are thorough and they work hard to include the young people's views and signature. Management monitoring is evaluative and encourages staff to reflect on their practice so as to develop their skills and improve outcomes for young people.

Staff have a robust approach to health and safety and ensure that the required checks are undertaken regularly, fire alarm systems maintenance and drills for example. Risk assessments are in place and specify the actions to be taken to minimise risks, however there are not risk assessments in place for all identified risks arising from young people's known behaviour. Locks on some doors may not be opened from the outside in the event of an emergency.

The summary of information available on staff files is insufficiently detailed to evidence full compliance with the regulations.

Leadership and management

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

This home is the third to open as part of a new project by the independent provider under contract to a number of local authorities to provide residential placements, with education, if required. The Statement of Purpose is up to date and provides an accurate picture of the work the staff are endeavouring to do in the home. The pattern of admissions is not fully within the control of the manager of the home and is a contributory factor to some of the current difficulties.

The monitoring undertaken in the home is thorough and the report of the visit by provider's representative has a letter directly to the young people which is a summary of the findings and acknowledges their contribution to the visit. Records of accidents are held on young people's individual records but a central record is not maintained.

The manager and the staff team have been working together two months. The team is a mix of new and experienced staff, some of whom have been redeployed by the provider. The staff have worked in other homes while the registration process for this home was underway, and on occasion, staff move between homes. The manager is now working on uniting the team to ensure a consistent approach. All staff are receiving supervision, not all at the frequency outlined in the provider's policy, and two staff meetings have been held. Informal support is readily available and accessible but does not achieve the aim of enabling staff to adopt a consistent approach in their work with young people. The provider is committed to providing training, both core, and in response to the identified needs of the young people placed.

The staffing levels in the home are in response to the identified needs of the young people placed, including a waking night. The records provide an inconsistent account of the hours actually worked. Some of the shift patterns are under review to ensure that staff do not get too tired to work effectively with the young people. The on call arrangements provide staff on duty with sufficient support when this is required.

The staff maintain detailed records and include the views and opinions of the young people. These records are securely stored and there is appropriate sharing of information as required and professionals speak highly of the effective communication by the staff. Staff are sometimes delayed in writing records due a lack of IT equipment.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.