

Inspection report for children's home

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<b>Inspection date</b>	8 October 2009
<b>Inspector</b>	Jacqueline Malcolm
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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.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

## The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

## **Service information**

### **Brief description of the service**

The children's home is run by a local authority. It is registered to accommodate up to six young people aged between 12 and 17 years of either gender. The home provides long term residential care to young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The home is situated in a residential area in a village location. It is close to public transport and motorway networks and is not far from the town centre.

The aims of the setting is to support, advise and assist young women with their emotional development, education, work and independent living skills to assist in preparing them for adulthood.

### **Summary**

This was an unannounced key inspection to check the home's capacity to meet the outcome areas of being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution, achieving economic well-being and organisation. Previous actions and good practice recommendations made at the last inspection were also checked.

The service provides some satisfactory outcomes for young people. Staff promote aspects of health, education, independence, contact, consultation and leisure activities. However, there are serious concerns arising predominantly under staying safe and organisation. There are ongoing safeguarding issues that have not been notified to Ofsted. Care planning information has not been reviewed to reflect changes in young people's behaviour or placement needs and not all key documents were available for inspection. The home is short staffed, which has created some instability in the home. Not all staff are trained to administer medication or restrain young people. This is particularly notable when young people are not engaged in positive relationships with staff. The monitoring systems are not robust and the issues raised at this inspection point towards the leadership and management of the home.

The overall quality rating is inadequate.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last inspection, the registered person was required to improve practice on the complaints procedure, safeguarding issues, leaving care, education plans and the home environment. Evidence from this inspection demonstrates that these actions have now been met. Actions and good practice recommendations that relate to shopping, sanctions, restraints, fire records, home environment, monitoring and meals are not satisfactorily met.

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people are encouraged to eat healthy meals that promote their good health. Young people express satisfaction with meals and say they get enough to eat and drink. Menus are planned and include some vegetables and fruit. Take-away meals are limited to just once a week. However, the actual meals eaten by young people are not routinely recorded to clearly show how they are provided with balanced and nutritious meals that include their 'five a day'

fruit and vegetables. Some young people are involved in shopping with staff and they prepare and cook their own meals. The second kitchen is a good resource to promote independence for the young people who use this facility.

Satisfactory arrangements are in place to ensure that young people's health needs are met. All young people are registered with key health professionals. Specialist services are identified and sought depending on the needs of the young people. Staff support young people by attending health appointments and they record the outcomes. The looked after children's nurse has close links with the young people and staff and will visit the home to undertake health needs assessments. Young people are supported to address issues, such as alcohol, drugs and sexual health. They confirm that staff help them when they are unwell. Typical comments include: 'tell us to rest, and drink plenty of water or phone NHS Direct to support us with medical help'; 'talk to you privately to get to the source of the problem'. The home is addressing smoking cessation issues with the young people and the looked after children's nurse has visited the young people to talk about it. However, young people who smoke are not consistently discouraged from this behaviour.

All medicines are safely stored in a locked cabinet and any medication dispensed is fully recorded. Most staff are trained in first aid and medical consents are in place. However, the arrangements to ensure that staff are properly trained to administer medication to young people is not robust. This is because it cannot be confirmed whether non substantive staff are appropriately trained. No medication was administered to young people when non substantive staff were on duty so there is no immediate impact on outcomes for young people. The new medication policy has not been implemented, which is an ongoing issue. This does not support staff practice when administering medication.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is inadequate.

Young people's information is confidentially maintained and respected. Young people have their own rooms and can use a phone in private. There is an ongoing issue about staff having to purchase items using purchase orders and not cash. The current arrangements are that when young people and staff go shopping, at the point of paying the bill, the young person goes to the supermarket café for a drink so is not present when the order is processed. These are improved interim arrangements that although not satisfactory, have a lesser impact on young people's privacy and dignity.

Young people are protected from bullying. Staff are aware about the potential for young people to bully and deal with it when it happens. Young people know how to complain and are supported by staff and workers from the children's rights service. One complaint made by a young person and previous complaints could not be located. It is not clear how the complaint has been dealt with, with respect to the action taken and the outcome of the investigation.

Most staff are trained in child protection and talk to young people about keeping safe. Young people confirm this happens. Staff also get support from colleagues from agencies who visit the young people and discuss self-protection issues with them. The arrangements to ensure that safeguarding issues are dealt with promptly have improved and there are better working relationships between lead professionals to work together in the best interests of children and young people. There are some young people who are subject to strategy meetings due to the

concerns about their risky behaviour and the potential harm to their safety and welfare. Since the last inspection, none of these strategy meetings have been notified to Ofsted.

Practices to manage the behaviour of young people who frequently go missing without authority is inconsistent and does not keep young people safe. Young people who go missing without authority are reported within the agreed protocols and records are made when young people go missing and return. However, there is no discussion or exploration with young people about their whereabouts when they return. Placement plans that include information about absconding behaviour are not followed in practice and have not been reviewed. Not all placement plans indicate the agreed strategies that staff can use to monitor missing young people and indicate how they may be prevented from leaving the home.

Young people's challenging behaviour is not appropriately or safely managed. There are no clear management strategies or agreed boundaries to empower staff when managing difficult behaviour. On the day of the inspection, young people's behaviour had been escalating for a couple of weeks. No proactive steps have been taken to review and address the immediate changes in some of the young people's behaviours.

Relationships between staff and young people are not based on mutual respect and safe, consistent and understandable boundaries. Staff are not always substantive team members, which causes instability for some young people. At the time of the inspection, all staff were subject to assaults by young people, including one member of staff who had a dead rat thrown at them. This also raises health and safety concerns that the service is addressing. A fire extinguisher was removed from the premises and the contents sprayed outside. In another incident, the front door was kicked so severely that a joiner was called out to secure it. Some interactions between staff and young people take place behind the locked office door. The Police were contacted on two occasions to speak to the young people about their behaviour. Staff confirm that police intervention is not used as a means of behaviour management. However, what is evident is that young people's behaviour could not be restored effectively without the threat of police intervention.

Young people who express racist language are not appropriately or consistently challenged. Information about young people's racist behaviour is not included in their care planning information and risk assessments, to ensure that all staff are aware and follow the appropriate management strategies. Not all staff feel that there is a consistent approach to practice in the home, which often means that when young people pose challenging behaviour and staff impose a sanction, this has been undermined by other staff. This view is supported by a comment made by a young person who reported that the home could do better by being: 'Stricter on other's actions.' These incidents and behaviours undermine the promotion of socially acceptable behaviour and do not promote the safety and welfare of young people.

Staff say that young people have not been restrained for some time. However, on the day of the inspection, there were incidents when young people who refused to leave the office were withdrawn by staff. These actions constitute a restraint. These restraints were also used to force compliance and not all staff involved have been trained to restrain young people, which could result in inappropriate restraints and injuries to young people. At no point following the restraints did staff make a record in the restraint book. The safety and welfare of young people is compromised by these unsafe and reactive practices that place young people at risk of harm. It also questions whether staff are restraining young people and not recording them. The

sanctions book had been removed from the premises and was not available for inspection. This is concerning because sanctions are not recorded in a timely manner and may provide an inaccurate picture when they are monitored.

Not all of the young people's risk assessments are up to date or have been reviewed. The fire risk assessment is out of date. Fire prevention checks are completed. However, no fire drills have been done. Visitors to the home are appropriately checked and measures are in place to ensure the safe recruitment of staff.

## **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff promote the education of young people. All young people are actively encouraged to attend school. Individual support is in place for young people who need it. Overall, attendance is good and the home has established positive relationships with the looked after children education team. Young people who are preparing for independence are well supported to seek employment and attend college. Incentives are in place for school attendance and young people respond well to this. Young people confirm that they have the space to do their school work and get help from staff.

Young people say that they are involved in group and individual activities on offer to them and staff encourage this. For example, sporting activities, DVD, pamper time and holidays. Young people also have opportunities to go on holidays and day trips with family and carers. This promotes their confidence and self-esteem.

Not all young people get the support to meet all of their needs. All young people have a social worker. There is good support from health, education, psychology professionals and other services linked to young people keeping themselves safe. Young people have key workers allocated to them. However, staff shortages have meant that not all key work sessions have taken place. It is unclear what interim arrangements are in place for young people to approach staff for support and guidance and to help them address their presenting and changing needs.

## **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is satisfactory.

Most of the placements made are planned; however, despite the efforts made by staff, not all of the placements meet the needs of young people and keep them safe. Young people have placements plans. These are developed based on young people's assessed needs. Missing documents are requested from placing social workers as appropriate. However, the placement plans have not been updated to reflect the current issues affecting the young people. This includes a review of plans that have no impact on young people's behaviour. The plans are not signed by young people, nor have they commented, so do not demonstrate how they have been involved in the process.

The needs of young people are formally reviewed and young people are consulted and are involved in the process. One young person said: 'I attend all of my reviews and case planning meetings and contribute to these so that everyone knows what I want to see change or happen.' Contact is actively promoted and staff facilitate contact between young people and their family at the home as appropriate. Friends can also visit and some have stayed for meals.

Young people are encouraged to express their views. Staff consult with the young people and recently consulted with them about decorating their rooms and furnishing the home.

## **Achieving economic wellbeing**

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff promote and support young people to develop independence skills. Some young people have made successful transitions into independence with staff support. Some young people who have moved into independence continue to keep in touch with staff. Young people are learning a range of skills, for example, cooking, cleaning, laundry and budgeting skills. A second kitchen is used by young people on semi-independent and independence plans. A pathway plan is in place for one young person and priority has been given to another. The home has positive contacts with leaving care services for looked after children.

The home environment has been improved to promote a homely atmosphere. However, on the day of the inspection, parts of the home, such as the hallway and floor were subject to damage and remnants of food thrown during a disruptive period at the home were noted. This was later cleaned up by staff. Most parts of the home have been redecorated and refurbished and other furnishings and fixtures will be added in consultation with young people. Young people's rooms are decorated to suit their tastes. However, some of the rooms are not maintained to a good standard. For example, screws are missing from door handles and door knobs are missing from cupboard doors. Wardrobe drawers and doors are dislocated. There are no bed heads noted on the single beds. The televisions are located on the same table as the sink. In one room, the radiator is damaged. These issues have the potential to pose health and safety hazards.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is inadequate.

The statement of purpose was updated in January 2009. It informs people of the services they can expect to receive from the home. The children's guide is child-focussed and targeted at the type of young people it is intended to reach. The guide informs young people about the complaints procedure, including Ofsted contact details.

The promotion of equality and diversity is inadequate. This is evidenced mainly in the outcome areas of staying safe and organisation. Not all young people's needs are holistically met. No staff are trained in equality and diversity and it is not clear how young people are supported to understand their behaviour when they present discriminatory views.

The home is short staffed, due to sickness and temporary absences. There is regular use of casual and agency staff that young people are familiar with. However, some instability has been created. One young person who was consulted said the home could improve: ' by the use of consistent staff as its hard to talk to agency as you don't know if there going to be working again.' Representation has been made by the home to senior management to look at a resolution to the staffing problems. This is being addressed.

All of the substantive staff are trained in the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 3. Staff who do not have this qualification are registered to attend. Not all staff who are supporting staff absence are trained in certain child care practices, for example, administration of medication and restraint techniques. There are clear deputising arrangements to cover the manager's absence. They are qualified, experienced and know the young people. However,



staff handovers are ad hoc. This is particularly notable when staff arrive on duty when young people present challenging behaviour and management strategies are not agreed. Due to staffing issues, not all staff have had supervision.

There are internal and external systems to monitor standards of care. However, the systems are not robust. Although some issues are identified for action, not all of the shortfalls are identified and addressed to improve services for young people. The organisation has not followed their own instructions to improve the external monitoring systems by visiting the home more frequently. The reports that follow the Regulation 33 visits do not include information about how young people and staff are consulted about their experiences. The reports have not been submitted to Ofsted in a timely manner. The management and leadership of the home is compromised when robust systems are not in place.

Young people's files are maintained in a satisfactory condition. However, some of the information to support young people is not included or is out of date.

## What must be done to secure future improvement?

### Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, The Childrens Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
13	ensure the amended medication policy is implemented and made available to staff (Regulation 11(1)(a))	30 October 2009
9	ensure that the arrangements to promote young people's dignity and privacy when purchasing food and necessities for their daily living are resolved (Regulation 11)	30 November 2009
16	ensure a written record of all complaints, the action taken in response and the outcome of the investigation is made (Regulation 24(5))	30 October 2009
30	ensure significant events relating to the protection of children accommodated in the home are appropriately notified to Ofsted (Regulation 30)	30 October 2009
19	ensure the policy and guidance relating to young people missing from home without authority is implemented and followed so that young people are protected (Regulation 16)	30 October 2009
22	ensure the behaviour management policy is followed in practice to set out how appropriate behaviour will be promoted and managed in the home (Regulation 17(2))	30 October 2009
22	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of restraint, a written record is made in the restraint book (Regulation 17(4))	30 October 2009
22	ensure that the sanctions book is available for inspection at all times (Care Standards Act 2000, 31(4)(a))	23 October 2009

31	ensure staff are trained in appropriate behaviour management techniques and the administration of medication (Regulation 27(4)(a))	30 November 2009
26	ensure fire drills are undertaken at regular intervals (Regulation 32 (e))	30 October 2009
2	ensure all young people know the overall content of their placement plan, according to their level of understanding (Regulation 12)	30 October 2009
2	contact the social worker to review the placement needs of the young person discussed to ensure that their needs can be met at the home (Regulation 4, 11 and 12)	23 October 2009
24	ensure that the home is maintained in good order throughout (Regulation 31(2))	30 November 2009
28	ensure all staff receive supervision at regular intervals (Regulation 27)	30 October 2009
33	ensure robust monitoring and clear management overview of all care practices within the home and identify and remedy any shortfalls within reasonable timescales. Regulation 33 reports must be supplied to Ofsted in a timely manner. (Regulation 33 and 34)	30 October 2009

## Recommendations

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

- provide a menu that accurately reflects the food served to demonstrate a healthy and balanced diet is being provided (NMS 10)
- actively discourage young people from smoking in a consistent manner (NMS 12.6)
- develop strategies to make sure that socially unacceptable behaviour is responded to in a positive and constructive manner (NMS 22)
- agree practical and acceptable means of responding to behaviour and control problems of both the current group and individual young people, in light of their histories, any current problems and placement plans (NMS 22.16)
- review and update all risk assessments (NMS 26.2)
- review physical restraint practices so that it is not used to force compliance (NMS 22)
- make appropriate arrangements to enable young people to have obtain individual support, guidance and advice (NMS 2.2)
- review staffing at the home to ensure the home's staffing policy can be maintained (NMS 30.7)
- make provision for staff rotas to have time scheduled to ensure that handover sessions, spending time with individual young people, completion of records, planning and carrying

put care programmes without compromising overall care of young people can be met (NMS 29.6)

- provide an opportunity for any young people or member of staff to meet with the Regulation 33 visitor. (NMS 32.2)