

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 home is owned and operated by a private organisation that specialises in the assessment and treatment of male adolescents who have experienced some form of abuse and have subsequently been involved in perpetrating abusive behaviour themselves. The overall aim of the service is to offer four young men the opportunity to embark on specialised educational and therapeutic training programmes within a safe, supportive and nurturing environment. Most young people remain with the service for a minimum of two years. All young people are expected to be in full-time education or some form of suitable employment, and the organisation has its own school provision which those of school age attend.

There is 24-hour staff cover provided and young people have to comply with strict systems of supervision and monitoring, and take part in a range of individual and group forums as part of a therapeutic environment.

Overall effectiveness

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

The home is under new ownership since the last inspection, the transfer took place at the beginning of September. Some new systems have been set up, those relating to finance in particular but others, maintenance and refurbishment for example, have yet to be established.

The staff team have established positive relationships with the young people, know them well and work consistently to their plans. Individual needs are identified and targets set with and for young people so that they achieve the aims of their placement. Staff engage young people effectively and enable them to confidently express their views and thoughts. This means that staff and young people to work together with a strong awareness of and emphasis on the necessary safeguarding elements.

The inspection has identified seven shortfalls, as listed in the requirements and recommendations section below. Some of these have the potential to 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
24 (2001)	ensure the complaints record includes whether or not the complainant is satisfied with the outcome (Regulation 24)	30/11/2011
21 (2001)	ensure that medication is administered as prescribed, that records are consistent and that all medication is within the expiry date (Regulation 21)	15/11/2011
31 (2001)	develop and implement a programme for repair, refurbishment and redecoration (Regulation 31)	30/11/2011
26 (2001)	ensure that for all staff and volunteers working in the home full and satisfactory information is available in respect of each of the matters specified in Schedule 2. (Regulation 26)	30/11/2011

Recommendations

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

- evidence the contribution of young people to their placement plans (NMS 1)
- obtain evidence that independent visitors to the home have been vetted as outlined in Standard 16.3 (NMS 16.3)
- ensure that monitoring in accordance with Schedule 6 is robust. (NMS 21)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Most young people make good progress from their starting points at the time of admission. A social worker said, 'I can see considerable progress, he has developed relationships with people and manages situations much better, for example, he now contributes to and engages with reviews but is some way from being able to fully access services'. Another commented, 'He has started to earn and use unsupervised time through the risk assessed discretion process'. The therapeutic input supports and encourages young people to come to an understanding of their history and develop and use strategies to manage their own behaviour and responses.

Young people feel well supported to achieve and maintain good health. A social worker commented on the good work that staff do in striking a balance between enabling young people to take responsibility for their own health and intervening where necessary. Another social worker commented on the valuable role the individual therapist plays in the emotional development of a young person.

There is good support for young people to attend school and college. All those in education have excellent attendance and benefit from one-to-one support where this

is required. In-house education is tailored to meet individual needs. There are strong links established with local colleges and young people attend courses that suit their interests and abilities. One young person expressed his pleasure in how college is going and feels he is growing up. Those refusing to engage in education post 16 years are occupied by staff and participate in some voluntary work with a view to expanding their skill base.

Young people are clear that they have a voice in the home and their views are important to staff. Staff encourage young people to identify activities that they would like to participate in and support them in this where possible, taking into account the outcome of a full risk assessment. Activities currently undertaken include bike rides, cinema trips, volunteering to do dog walking for a local home, and kayaking is about to be resumed.

Young people benefit from contact in accordance with the plans in place. There is unambiguous guidance for staff about how contact is to be managed both to safeguard and make contact an enjoyable experience for all involved.

Young people develop practical self-care and independence skills in their work with staff, in the context of their individual needs and the risks associated with abusive behaviour and experiences.

Quality of care

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

There are sound and positive relationships between the young people and the staff team. The interactions between the young people can be challenging at times. Staff are attuned to the difficulties in relationships between the young people and are adept at anticipating where tensions may arise and taking action to diffuse these circumstances, with increasing success. Staff actively encourage young people to bring their views to the weekly house meetings and to call additional meetings to address arising issues. Young people demonstrate a good understanding of what is and is not possible and the reasons why. One young person said, 'staff are super, they care a lot, do things when we are struggling, play a game, go for a drive for example. Staff listen to what I say'. Young people know how to make a complaint and feel that staff take their complaints seriously and respond. A social worker commented that young people are well supported in the complaints process. However, the complaints record does not show whether or not the complainant is satisfied with the outcome.

Each young person has a needs, assessment and treatment plan that is reviewed and updated every three months. These plans identify needs relating to personal identity, culture and background and how these needs are to be addressed. Young people are involved in the process although some plans do not show the contribution of the young person to the final version. Staff are familiar with the plans and work to them. There are clear individual targets set for each young person and achievements in

hitting the targets are reviewed daily.

Staff ensure that young people have opportunities to access the routine and specialist health care appointments they need. Young people may refuse to attend these appointments and staff are creative in the ways in which they encourage young people to attend appointments and engage in treatment. Each young person has written consent forms in place so that members of staff may administer medication or first aid where this is necessary. Some young people have complicated and changing medication regimes in place. However, some medication records are not consistent, with the potential for error in the timing of administration. One item of medication for young people is significantly out of date and a replacement is not available in the house. There is a clear framework of therapeutic support for each young person within the organisation, through both individual and group programmes.

The home is in a residential area of a large town and is indistinguishable from its neighbours. The home is situated within easy reach of local facilities and is on a public transport route. The house is showing signs of wear and tear, particularly the kitchen. The new owners have yet to establish a maintenance programme for the house.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Safeguarding young people and the wider community is a central tenet of the work of this home and young people generally feel safe. Young people have a strong awareness of safe and unsafe behaviour, their own and that of others. Through robust supervision staff actively support young people to acknowledge and address behaviour that may lead them and others to feel unsafe. Staff receive a child protection briefing as part of their induction training and there is regular training for all staff. Staff have a heightened awareness of issues that could be interpreted as potentially abusive. Young people know how to safeguard themselves and each other but do not always put this knowledge into practice. Young people are encouraged to give feedback to each other, in a group setting, about behaviour or comments that they perceive as 'risky' in organisational terms. Staff clearly enforce the idea of personal responsibility within a framework of consequences.

The change of dynamics in the house has led to a decrease in the number of incidents and instances of unauthorised absence. The protocol with the local police, for instance, when young people leave staff supervision without permission, is under review. Staff have maintained a strong emphasis on the promotion of positive behaviour. Young people say that staff are fair and consistent in how sanctions and rewards are used. There is a policy of no physical intervention in accordance with the personal space boundary applied across the organisation.

Young people actively contribute to the recruitment of staff. There is a robust recruitment policy in place but this is not fully applied. For example, not all the information required, such as photographs, is held on staff files. The manager identified during his monitoring that a member of staff required an update to a Criminal Records Bureau check, as the previous check was significantly out of date. The last inspection recommended that the home obtain confirmation that the required checks on independent visitors have been undertaken. The organisation has undertaken a Criminal Records Bureau check but confirmation of the other checks required has not been obtained. All visits to date have been supervised, thus safeguarding the young people.

There has been a recent health and safety audit and risk assessment of the premises. The servicing and routine checks of fire safety systems, equipment and gas and electric installations take place as required. Some of the garden fencing is missing and has been for several months. Work planned on the exterior of the house at the last inspection has not taken place and a young person commented on the lack of lighting in the conservatory. The approach to health and safety is not sufficiently robust to provide young people with good quality safe accommodation.

Leadership and management

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

There is a clear Statement of Purpose and placing social workers are complimentary about how the work undertaken is in accordance with the statement. One said 'a resource that I would recommend to colleagues looking to place children with similar needs'; another said, 'I am pleased with how the provider has kept to the contract'. Social workers also comment that staff are very responsive to changing needs, recognising the range of abilities, and are flexible in their approach within a clear risk assessment framework.

This is the first inspection under the new ownership of this service. The way in which monthly visits are undertaken has been reviewed and these are now undertaken by a senior post holder in the organisation. The first visit under this new system took place at the end of September. Young people know the visitor and confirm that they are consulted during these visits. The manager has also developed a system for monitoring and is in the process of writing a report. The monitoring is insufficiently robust, for example medication issues raised in this report have not been picked up through management monitoring. There is a policy and procedure followed in practice for the notification of significant events. Social workers confirm that the home communicates effectively with them to promote the welfare of young people.

There were six requirements and four recommendations made following the last inspection. Four requirements have been met. Medical risk assessments and placement plans are up to date and known by staff; staffing levels are sufficient for the task and there is evidence that all placement needs are considered when a young person moves in from another of the organisation's homes. Two requirements have been partly met in that monitoring is taking place and the complaints record has

improved. The deficits are outlined elsewhere in this report. Three of the four recommendations related to records and have been met. One concerned the checks required for volunteers, and is reported on in the safeguarding section of this report.

Young people receive good support from a small core staff team supplemented by consistent bank staff and staff from the organisation's education facility. The staffing levels meet the needs of the young people and provide opportunities for one-to-one support and help. Staff benefit from both formal and informal supervision, ensuring that they have the opportunity to address issues as they arise. The manager is developing a training programme in the light of identified needs and some training has been scheduled with a healthcare professional.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.