

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Maire Atherton / Emeline Evans
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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 people 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 2011. Some new systems have been set up those relating to finance and service contracts in particular but others, maintenance and refurbishment for example, have yet to be established.

Young people benefit from individualised care underpinned by robust therapeutic input, described as 'amazing' by one social worker. Staff know the young people well and work with them effectively to keep themselves and others safe.

The shortfalls identified primarily relate to records that are not fully maintained and policies and procedures that have not been kept up to date which has the potential to impact on outcomes for young people. This is a reflection of the priority of the manager and core staff team to meet the day-to-day needs of the young people placed and indicates that staff do not have enough time to meet the full requirements of their roles.

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
21 (2001)	ensure that there is secure evidence of the safe arrangements for the recording and administration of medicines (Regulation 21 (1))	09/12/2011
17 (2001)	ensure the recording and application of measures of discipline imposed meet the requirements of Regulation 17B (Regulation 17B3(b)(f))	30/12/2011
24 (2001)	ensure young people receive a timely response to complaints and their satisfaction with the outcome is recorded (Regulation 24)	30/12/2011
29 (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 4 and a summary of matters specified in Schedule 2 (Regulation 29 (1))	31/01/2012
31 (2001)	develop and implement a programme for repair, refurbishment and redecoration (Regulation 31 (2) (3))	30/12/2011
16 (2001)	update the safeguarding policy and procedure (Regulation 16 (1)(2))	30/12/2011
4 (2001)	update and make available the Statement of Purpose and young person's guide (Regulation 4 (1)(3))	31/01/2012
30 (2001)	ensure notifications are made in accordance with Regulation 30 (1) Schedule 5 (Regulation 30 (1))	09/12/2011
27 (2001)	ensure that staff receive appropriate training at regular intervals. (Regulation 27 (4)(a))	30/12/2011

Recommendations

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

- evidence how young people's views, wishes and feelings contribute to their placement plans (NMS 1.1)
- ensure individual risk assessments address all areas of identified risk (NMS 44)
- submit the updated child protection procedures to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board. (NMS 20.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people benefit from individualised support which helps them grow in confidence. Individual time with staff provides opportunities for discussion and learning. Group living teaches young people how to negotiate and share. Young people receive good emotional support through effective communication between

the teaching staff, therapists and the care staff. This holistic approach ensures that young people receive consistent responses from all the adults. Through understanding their past experiences young people are able to move on and develop a positive self-view in preparation for their transition to adulthood. One placing social worker reports that a young person is 'managing their anger and articulating what he wants for his future, he is a resilient child and the unit has done well for him.'

The staff encourage healthy eating and support the young people to produce nutritious and balanced menus, although those taking responsibility for their own meals do not always put the theory into practice. Meals are taken around the table and provide an opportunity for social interaction. Young people are actively involved in food preparation and cooking to develop their independence and life skills. This is encouraged and supported by the staff.

All young people are in full time education at the school or local college. Young people talk positively about their education and learning opportunities and have celebrated success in both attendance and achievement in education.

The staff team ensures the young people experience a variety of social and leisure opportunities both in the home and the wider community. This is carefully risk assessed by staff. Young people are given the opportunity to attend clubs and visit local attractions and develop links with the wider community. When young people have achieved the necessary steps they are encouraged to socialise with friends outside the home within a clear risk assessment framework and guidelines.

Young people are supported with contact visits and telephone calls and they benefit from the emotional support of staff at these times. Individual contact arrangements are suitably supported and facilitated by staff. Young people confirm that they understand the contact plans and arrangements that are in place. Placing authorities report on the flexibility of the home in providing and supporting these arrangements for contact.

Young people assist with tasks around the home and develop their level of independence depending on age and ability. For example, young people receive an allowance to be able to budget, shop and cook their own meals. Staff validate young people's achievements and encourage them through reward systems which contribute to enhancing their self-esteem.

Quality of care

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

Relationships between the core staff group and young people are a real strength of the service. This enables young people to be able to address some of their emotional and behavioural issues. Young people are supported to develop socially acceptable behaviours through consistent messages and role modelling by staff. However, it is unclear how much work is undertaken in this area as records are inconsistent and incomplete. Young people have an appropriate and clear reward system in place but

the way in which consequences are applied is variable.

House meetings take place regularly, giving the young people the opportunity to express their views about the running of the home. These meetings are also used to enable a young person to understand why it is not always possible to act on their wishes. Young people value and benefit from these meetings. Other opportunities are available to young people giving private time to talk to staff on a one-to-one basis. Young people are encouraged by the home to attend looked after children reviews. Young people know how to make a complaint. However, complaints records are incomplete and it was unclear if young people are satisfied with the outcome.

Young people's needs are clearly shown in placement plans which are indicative of the young people's complex needs and identify cultural needs and personal identity. However, the extent of involvement of the young people in developing these plans is not evidenced. Staff have positive and realistic aspirations for the young people. The records available do not show the work undertaken in this area and whether pertinent areas for development are being progressed. Young people engage in a variety of activities and staff work extensively with the young people about their safety in the community

Young people's health needs are being met. Staff encourage and support young people to attend health and therapy sessions. Medications are locked in a secure cabinet and overarching medication policies and procedures are in place. There are shortfalls regarding the administration of young people's medication. Documentation and guidance is not present to indicate the procedure when a young person refuses medication and when use of a medication is changed. A controlled drugs register is in place, however, improvements are required to strengthen systems in place and for compliance with their own policy and royal pharmaceutical guidance.

The service is a four-bedded children's home in a residential area of a large town. The home is situated within easy reach of local facilities and is on a public transport route. Young people live in a home that is comfortable and young people can personalise their bedrooms to their own taste. However, the house is showing signs of considerable wear and tear which detracts from a homely environment.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people have a strong understanding of what they need to do to be safe and feel safe and are well supported by staff to help them achieve this. This is underpinned by a robust therapeutic framework within which young people benefit from individual and group therapy. A social worker commented 'staff do a good job of protecting young people and making it a safe home for residents', another said 'teaching a young person how to protect himself and the wider community is one of the strengths of the company'. Young people say they have a number of people they would talk to if they had a worry or concern, both in the house and the wider

organisation.

Safeguarding is core to the work of the home. Staff are knowledgeable about the in-house procedure to be followed in the event of a safeguarding concern. However, the written policy in the home is out of date and does not contain the required information. The senior management team has established links with the local authority safeguarding officer and make referrals when necessary.

Staff know the individual vulnerabilities of young people and are good at anticipating issues that could trigger inappropriate or challenging behaviour. Young people are encouraged in positive behaviour through clear goal setting with rewards earned for achievement. Young people know the rules of the house and understand that staff may impose consequences for breaking the rules. There is a lack of written information for young people about the sanctions that could be applied and there is no evidence as to how these target unacceptable behaviour or evaluation as to their effectiveness. There is a policy of no physical intervention in accordance with the personal space boundary applied across the organisation. Support from the local police is sought should staff determine that physical intervention is necessary. The head of care is in the process of updating the protocol with the police and this includes the missing person protocol and procedures.

Young people actively contribute to the recruitment of staff. There is a robust recruitment policy and procedure in place but this is not fully adhered to. The staff records held in the home for permanent, agency and volunteers do not contain all the information required by regulation.

The servicing and routine checks of fire safety systems, equipment and gas and electric installations take place as required. There are risk assessments in place both environmental and on individuals. Most but not all risk assessments are up to date and identify the risk and the measures in place to reduce this. Work planned in the house at the last inspection has not taken place and young people have raised this issue in their house meetings. 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**.

This is the first inspection under the new ownership of this service. The transfer of ownership took longer than envisaged and improvements planned at the time of the last inspection had stalled. Progress is beginning to be made on moving forward and the creation of and appointment to the new post of head of care is part of this.

The Statement of Purpose clearly states the aims and objectives of the service and these are well known by the young people and the placing authorities. Social workers say 'the home meets the objectives well'. The Statement of Purpose does not contain all the required information and the guide for young people is out of date and not easily accessible. This means that young people do not have full written information

about the home and what they can expect.

The way in which monthly visits are undertaken has been reviewed and these are now undertaken by the head of care. Young people know the visitor and confirm that they are asked for their views during these visits. Monitoring takes place and some identified deficits have been addressed through this process but it lacks evaluation, for example, there is a policy and procedure followed in practice for the notification of significant events but not all have been notified as required. Social workers confirm that the home communicates effectively with them to promote the welfare of young people.

There is an acting manager in post due to the planned long term leave of absence of the Registered Manager. The acting manager is one of three full time members of staff deployed in the home, one of whom is still on their probationary period, and consequently has limited management time available. This core group of staff is supplemented by a significant number of staff from elsewhere in the organisation and infrequently by agency staff. Although young people know these staff they say they would like more of the same staff to work in the home and not change too often. The organisation is aware of this and is actively recruiting staff. There are usually two members of staff on shift. Staff work hard to provide opportunities for one-to-one and meet individual and group needs. This can lead to some tension in trying to meet both sets of needs, particularly during the school holidays. Staff involve young people in the decision making process to achieve outcomes that satisfy all, this is not always possible but enables young people to develop an understanding of each other's needs and good negotiation skills.

There were two recommendations made at the last inspection one concerned staff training needs in respect of medication and first aid, the other the recording of external complaints, neither has been met.

Staff benefit from both formal and informal supervision, ensuring that they have the opportunity to address issues as they arise. Information relating to training undertaken, needed and scheduled is not easy to access thus failing to evidence that staff receive appropriate and timely training.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.