

## Inspection report for children's home

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<b>Inspector</b>	Maire Atherton
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## 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.

### The inspection judgements and what they mean

**Outstanding:** a service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

**Good:** a service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements

**Adequate:** a service that only meets minimum requirements

**Inadequate:** a service that does not meet minimum requirements

## Overall effectiveness

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

Although the overall judgement is adequate there are a number of strengths that provide young people with a sound service. Young people feel safe and have developed positive relationships with staff. These attachments enable young people to discuss issues that are troubling them and that impact on the achievement of good outcomes, though not always bringing about changes in behaviour. Staff support and management of contact and education is effective and has equipped young people to manage these areas well. Care planning is effective and young people's voices are an essential part of the process. Staff help young people to develop independent living skills.

The manager has submitted an application for registration. The staff team use supervision and team meetings well, using the time to reflect and consider how best to support the young people in their care. Young people appreciate the improvements made to the accommodation and are looking forward to the work

being finished.

This visit highlighted three shortfalls resulting in requirements. These relate to staff recruitment, deployment and training to ensure that young people are cared for by a suitable, sufficient and trained staff team at all times. Two recommendations are made. These relate to the review of the practice of calling out to ensure it is appropriate and proportionate, and records to ensure that these provide a sufficiently comprehensive picture of the young person's journey during their time in the home.

## Areas for improvement

### Statutory 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
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; in particular, that there is a full employment history, together with a satisfactory written explanation of any gaps in employment (Regulation 26 (3)(d))	31/08/2012
11 (2001)	ensure that staff are deployed so as to provide proper provision for the young people placed at all times (Regulation 11 (1)(a))	31/07/2012
27 (2001)	ensure that staff receive appropriate training at regular intervals; in particular, the training needs outlined in the national minimum standards. (Regulation 27 (4)(a))	30/09/2012

### Recommendations

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

- establish a system for reviewing the practice of young people calling out when moving from room to room to determine that it is appropriate and proportionate (NMS 4.5)
- ensure records contribute to an understanding of the young person's life. (NMS 22)

### Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people have made considerable personal progress since their admission to the

home. The individual and group support that they receive enables them to grow in confidence and develop a positive understanding of their personal history. Each young person is respected and valued as an individual and, as a result, young people are more able to sustain positive relationships. A therapist said, 'The residential team are getting attachment right, providing a sound basis for the therapeutic work.' One social worker commented: 'Therapy has done wonders' and 'He has addressed his behaviour, sat GCSEs and is attending college, which I would not have believed at the start of the placement.' Another said, 'They know him really well, they have insight and supported him to develop and move on from his offence.' At the time of this visit young people preparing for transition were testing boundaries. Young people have strong attachments to staff and engage in discussions about the lifestyle choices they are making. They have a good understanding of the issues arising from these choices but at present are frequently discounting these as not important to them at this time.

Until very recently young people have had excellent attendance at college and those for whom term has ended are supported and encouraged to make good use of their time. For example, this includes working alongside the handyman as well as exploring options for next term. Success and attendance are celebrated and close working with education is striving to keep young people on track.

The management of contact is a strength of the service, building from restricted, supervised contact to unsupervised contact managed by the young people themselves. A social worker observed that: 'Information from the therapists proved very useful in the risk assessment and decision-making processes around contact, leading to unsupervised family visits.' A young person said, 'Support for family visits was the best thing, I now arrange them myself and tell staff what I'm doing.'

Young people benefit from a range of leisure opportunities, both on an individual and group basis that supports their interests and potential career choices. Young people have mixed responses to the opportunities offered sometimes taking them up; at other times declining.

Young people learn and develop self-care and independent living skills that equip them well for adulthood. They participate in household chores and build up to having a full allowance that enables them to develop money-management skills with support. A social worker said, 'Staff have worked well with his insight and analytical skills and supported him to move from the thinking to the doing.'

## **Quality of care**

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

The staff have established good relationships with the young people and there is trust in the interactions. Young people getting ready to move on are spreading their wings and have recently begun to test boundaries, providing staff with new challenges. Young people generally respond positively to the consistent and persistent approach adopted by staff in response to these challenges. This includes

engaging in discussions. Young people say that they feel staff are genuinely concerned for their welfare, although conceding that they do not always like how this works in practice. For example, this includes being asked where they are going, what they are doing and being given a time to return. A social worker said, 'Staff look out for the welfare of young people and have their best interests at heart.'

The ethos of working in partnership with young people is embedded in the practice in the home. Young people feel that their views are taken into account and that they have a say in the running of the home. Young people and staff call house meetings to raise any issues they wish to discuss. Young people are sufficiently confident to enter into debate and challenge staff decisions. Staff are measured in their responses and young people, while not always happy with the outcome, have a good understanding of the rationale and feel staff are fair. A social worker observed, 'Staff display a good level of honesty with the young person; in meetings their no beating about the bush approach with their concerns engendered an honest response from the young person.' Young people know how to complain, feel their complaints are taken seriously and responded to in good time, although they may not always be completely satisfied with the outcome.

Social workers speak positively about the care planning in place. The in-house care plans, which have therapeutic, education and residential components, are of a good standard and reflect the aims of the local authority care plans. These identify needs arising from personal identity, culture and background and how these needs are to be addressed. The changing needs of young people are continually monitored and plans are updated by the staff in consultation, where appropriate, with parents, social workers and other professionals. Young people are fully involved in the formal quarterly review of these plans and their contribution is considered an essential part of the process. One social worker noted with pleasure, 'He has gained increased confidence in attending meetings and contributing to his own review.'

The health and well-being of young people is well promoted. Young people are given lots of information about how to keep healthy and offered support to achieve healthier lifestyles, although they do not always use the advice and support that is freely available. For example, young people are familiar with smoking cessation programmes but this is low on their personal agendas. They have a good knowledge of healthy eating and some demonstrate this in their menu planning, shopping and meal preparation. Young people generally attend the necessary routine and specialist appointments, although some require considerable staff persuasion and creative thinking over time. Staff ensure that medication is well managed on the infrequent occasions that it is required. The therapeutic framework provides support for each young person through both individual and group programmes. Young people benefit from the contribution of the therapy team to house meetings and staff meetings as staff and young people work together to develop strategies to improve outcomes.

Young people say that staff are good at supporting them in their education and leisure activities. The staff have built effective links with the colleges that enable any issues to be addressed as they arise and also celebrate successes. Young people are encouraged to explore the range of opportunities available and helped to submit

applications for courses on time. Attendance is carefully monitored and in this academic year, apart from the month immediately preceding this inspection, had been at over 97%. Young people's leisure choices are well funded within a clear framework that is known to all. Young people have opportunities for both group and individual activities that include cinema and go-karting, but they do not always take advantage of these opportunities. A caravan holiday over Easter was a big success, the resulting photo album providing young people with a reminder of an enjoyable time.

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. A new kitchen has been fitted and a new shower room created on the ground floor. The house is in the process of being redecorated and re-carpeted. Young people are involved in making decisions about colours and accessories. There are plans to relocate the office to the top floor and use the room to provide young people with an additional communal area.

### **Safeguarding children and young people**

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

Young people say that they feel safe in the home and acknowledge the work staff do with them in order to keep themselves safe. There is a clear risk-assessed framework in place, driven by each young person, that determines the level of supervision required throughout their time in the home. One of the house rules is that young people call out when moving from room to room. The rationale for this is to engage young people in taking personal responsibility for their own safety so that they can feel safe and be safe. The young people in the home at the time of this visit have worked through the therapeutic programme and in the process earned the highest level within the framework. However, there was no evidence that the need to continue call out had been evaluated or reviewed. The young people responded well to the increased personal responsibilities, demonstrating that they knew how to keep themselves safe. However the time of this inspection also coincided with some instances of risky behaviour; for example, young people being absent without permission. Staff engage effectively with young people on their return and discuss the issues openly. Social workers are confident that staff are working with the young people to determine the causes of the change in behaviour. The missing from home protocol is with the police; the organisation is awaiting their response.

Young people are safeguarded by staff trained in, and knowledgeable about, how to implement the procedures to follow should they be concerned for a young person's safety or welfare. Allegations are well managed in accordance with the procedures in place. Safeguarding policies within the service are updated and shared with the local authority safeguarding officer. The safety of young people and the wider community is well promoted by the good working relationship between the staff, the local police and the public protection officer. For example, this partnership working is reducing the young people's access to alcohol and tobacco in the local area.

Staff promote positive behaviour management through the use of incentives and rewards. Sanctions are used infrequently but young people know what they are and the circumstances in which they are likely to be applied. Effective monitoring by the acting manager has ensured that the few sanctions imposed have been appropriate. Young people say that there is no bullying in the house and that if there was this would be challenged by them and the staff, as bullying is not tolerated. There is a policy of no physical intervention in accordance with the personal space boundary applied across the organisation. The organisation is currently investigating alternatives to physical intervention training that will equip staff to manage physical challenges safely.

Although there are robust recruitment policies and procedures in place these are not implemented fully. Gaps in employment history are not explored in every case, thus not fully securing the recruitment processes. Young people confirm that they are involved in the recruitment of staff, through participation in the interview process, and that their views are taken into account.

The home provides children and young people with a physically-safe and secure environment. The servicing and maintenance of services and specialist equipment, fire alarm tests and drills takes place as required and is recorded. A robust approach to health and safety ensures that accidents are infrequent.

## **Leadership and management**

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

The previous Registered Manager resigned from the post following a lengthy planned absence. The person who took on the role during the planned absence has submitted a Registered Manager's application to Ofsted which is in progress. There were nine requirements and three recommendations made in the last inspection report. Of these, 10 issues have been addressed and two partially met. There has been an improvement in the recording of medication, sanctions and complaints. The Statement of Purpose and the young people's guide have been updated. The child protection policy has been updated and approved by the local authority designated officer. The programme of repair and refurbishment is well underway, providing young people with a much-improved living environment. Notifications are made as required. Staff records are accessible in-house and staff have received some training but these are subject to further requirements in this report.

The manager has a development plan in place and a good understanding of the areas for improvement. This is achieved through effective monthly monitoring of records and staff practice, and the evaluation of these on the impact this has for the young people in their care. For example, the manager has increased the number of permanent staff in post, thus providing a much-improved consistency of care for young people. Monitoring visits take place and the reports are submitted as required. The structure and reporting of these visits has recently changed in the light of an appointment to a new post to undertake this task across all the homes in the organisation to drive improvement and improve outcomes for young people.



The Statement of Purpose is up to date and accurately reflects what the home hopes to achieve for young people. A social worker commented: 'They have achieved what they set out to do, he now understands his offence and the impact on himself and others. I would recommend this service to others looking to place a young person with similar needs.' The manager has established effective working relationships with other agencies.

The staff team works well together and generally communicates effectively to ensure that young people benefit from consistent messages from the staff team. There are still occasions when shortfalls in staffing in this home are filled by staff from other homes or the education or therapy teams within the organisation. Staff from this home may also be deployed to the other homes. At the time of this visit, while building work is undertaken, two young people moved to another home along with staff. These changes led to one instance of confusion where young people had to wait outside for a member of staff to let them into the house. The circumstances of this are being investigated by the management.

Young people benefit from a staff team that receives good support through regular supervision and team meetings. Staff performance is evaluated and action is taken to achieve improvements; for example through targeted training. There is a clear programme of basic training. For example, there is a thorough induction plus first aid, food hygiene and child protection training which is updated as required. However it is unclear if all the training needs outlined in the national minimum standards is provided to staff, such as that relating to contact supervision and facilitation. The therapy team has started to roll out a new model of working that will equip residential staff to manage challenges and difficulties in a way that fits better with the therapeutic framework already in place. The aim is to bring the residential, education and therapeutic disciplines closer together and so provide young people with greater consistency of approach across the organisation. Staff are working towards or have obtained the necessary care qualifications. Staff understand their duties, roles and responsibilities.

The young people's records contain the information required by regulation but do not always show a full picture of a young person's journey.

## 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.