

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	David Putnam
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This service is a privately run children's home that provides accommodation for up to four young people, who may have emotional or behavioural difficulties. Therapy is available to all children and young people if required.

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 **good**.

Young people enjoy strong relationships with caring and well-motivated staff who know them well. The individual needs of young people are identified well and clear plans are in place to meet their needs. Young people are able to identify improvements in their lives since moving to the home. Placing authorities confirm that individual young people have made positive changes.

Staff ensure that young people are provided with a range of experiences in the home and the wider community. This improves the self-confidence of young people. All young people are in education and making progress. Staff are beginning work towards building the independence skills of young people. Young people who have moved on remain in contact with staff and young people still living in the home.

The views of young people are continually sought and influence the day-to-day running of the home. Young people are encouraged to express their feelings appropriately. Young people say they feel safe in the home. Young people do not go missing. This demonstrates a reduction in risk taking behaviours exhibited earlier in their lives. At times young people continue to present challenging behaviours, but they see sanctions imposed as fair and consistent. However, young people are restrained by staff frequently. Records of these restraints are made, but they do not fully meet the current regulations. Otherwise safeguarding practice is good.

Young people live in a home that is comfortable and well maintained. Continued redecoration and refurbishment provides a homely environment. One young person said, 'I love my room, especially my bed'. Electronic devices are fitted to all young

people's bedroom doors and activated at night. However, records of agreement to this monitoring are not in place.

Managers regularly review the quality of care, but did not forward a copy of a review report to Ofsted as required following the last inspection. This had limited impact upon the young people, but the requirement is made again. Recommendations are also made to encourage managers to improve the accessibility of information provided to young people in the children's guide and produce a development plan for 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
34 (2001)	supply to the HMCI a report in respect of any review conducted by him for the purposes of paragraph (1). (Regulation 34 (2))	13/07/2012
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline in a children's home, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose of which shall include all items listed in paragraph (3) and where a measure of restraint is used on a child the record must include all items listed in paragraph (4) (Regulation 17B (3)(a) to (i) and (4)(a) and (b))	31/07/2012
22 (2001)	ensure that electronic or mechanical monitoring devices for the surveillance of children are not used in a children's home except for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child concerned, or other children accommodated in the children's home. Where surveillance is used, the conditions set out in paragraph (1) must be met. (Regulation 22 (1)(a) to (d))	31/07/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure there is a written development plan, reviewed annually, for the future of the home, either identifying any planned changes in the operation or resources of the service, or confirming the continuation of the home's current operation and resource (NMS 15.2)

- ensure each child receives a children's guide at the point of placement and that the contents of the children's guide is explained to the child in a way that is accessible. (NMS 13.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people recognise the positive changes they make in their lives. They say that since moving to the home they are calmer and have learnt to trust adults. Young people are able to look to the future and describe clear plans of what they would like to do. They are able to identify what they are good at. When particular skills are identified, staff encourage and support young people to develop these. For example, young people have singing lessons and confidently take part in auditions and competitions. Staff enthusiastically celebrate individual achievements of young people. This helps develop confidence and self-esteem in young people.

Young people develop and maintain strong attachments with staff, particularly through key worker relationships. Where possible all young people have a female and a male key worker. A consistent staff group provides continuity for young people. Young people attend daily house meetings where everyone is respectfully given the opportunity to speak. Staff model appropriate ways for young people to express their feelings. Difficult issues are not avoided and some young people demonstrate maturity in addressing their peers.

The health needs of young people are effectively met. Independent reviewing officers refer to enormous improvement in the emotional well-being of young people. This is evidenced by the way in which young people are now able to stay in their reviews and make meaningful contributions. All young people have access to therapy. One young person has identified the progress they have made and said they no longer needed this therapy. The professionals agreed with this decision.

All young people attend education. Independent reviewing officers acknowledge significant progress in this respect. Prior to placement one young person had minimal attendance at school over a number of years. They now enthusiastically attend every day and have a realistic opportunity to attain qualifications. Other young people are currently taking some GCSE exams and plan to go to college later this year. Staff actively advocate for young people to ensure they obtain suitable school placements. Where education has been missed prior to admission, staff negotiate for young people to retake a year. This provides the opportunity for young people to take GCSE exams having been taught the full syllabus.

Staff work together with placing authorities to support contact arrangements. Through focus meetings, staff identify difficulties relating to contact from the perspective of young people and their parents. However, staff maintain their focus on the needs of each young person. When appropriate they help young people to manage their expectations. With the agreement of placing authorities staff tenaciously tracked down a missing parent of one young person. An independent

reviewing officer praised the work done to support the young person to re-establish this relationship. Staff regularly drive long distances so they can directly support young people before, during and after contact visits.

Managers and staff recognise they have limited experience of moving young people on to independence. Staff are beginning to encourage young people to develop practical skills and emotional resilience to enable them to move on when the time is right. For example, young people are supported to manage increased independence within the local community. One young person now works voluntarily in a charity shop to gain work experience to assist future job opportunities. Where young people have moved on, staff remain in contact with them and continue to offer support and advice.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from extremely positive relationships with a caring and motivated staff team. Young people's behaviour remains challenging at times, but staff say they strive to give unconditional positive regard. Consequently, young people are given the message that staff will not give up on them.

Young people are able to influence the running of the home through contributions to house meetings, forums and discussions with staff. Examples include the choice of food, activities and décor around the home, in particular their rooms. Young people are directly involved in the recruitment of any new staff and their views are taken into account.

Young people benefit from individual therapy sessions. These always take place away from the home. This provides another opportunity for young people to express themselves in a way they feel is safe and secure. Managers and directors also make themselves available to young people. Independent reviewing officers say that young people are now more able to stay in their reviews and make positive contributions. They identify the progress young people have made in this regard over their time in placement.

Young people are clear that they know how to make a complaint and say that they do so. Records evidence this and demonstrate that complaints are taken seriously and learning from the issues young people raise are taken forward. Young people are kept informed throughout the process.

Comprehensive, individualised care plans are in place for each young person. One member of staff commented, 'one size doesn't fit all for the way we work here'. These documents clearly identify areas of need, the actions proposed to meet those needs and a specific aim or target to be achieved. In addition, each young person benefits from documents that describe individualised behaviour management plans

and daily management routines. All documentation is regularly reviewed. Young people benefit from the consistent approach of all staff that follows on from these documents.

Staff consistently communicate the importance of education to young people. If young people struggle to attend their education setting for any reason, staff encourage, support and enable them to attend. Young people benefit from necessary facilities to do homework. Young people joke that if they ever forget their homework staff will 'nag' them to do it. A small library of books is kept in the living area. A quiet lounge with separate table is accessed by young people. Each young person has their own login to the home's computer.

Young people are encouraged to explore different experiences. Questions about faith and religion are responded to as appropriate. For example, one young person expressed interest in Christianity. Staff talked openly, provided a suitable Bible and at the request of the young person, accompanied them to a local church. Young people say they do not watch a lot of television. One member of staff said, 'it's not about the television being a baby-sitter, it's about us making positive relationships'. Instead, each young person has their own activity programme. In this way young people experience a wide range of activities both in and out of the home. Communal activities as a group are also arranged, particularly at weekends. Young people also enjoy short holidays, which are regularly organised for them.

The home is located in a quiet residential neighbourhood, away from main roads. A beach and coastal path are situated at the end of the road. One young person proudly pointed out that she could see the sea from her bedroom window. The home is decorated and maintained to a good standard. Communal areas have recently been refurbished. Staff say they see the environment of the home as very important adding, 'it can't be scruffy, young people need to want to return'. If young people damage property, sanctions are imposed to either directly involve young people in the repair or to make a financial contribution towards it. Young people say that sanctions are fair.

The safety of young people is enhanced by robust procedures for the administration of medicines. These are systematically adhered to by staff. All prescribed and homely medications are logged in and out. Accurate and clear records of administration and disposal of medications are maintained.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

High levels of restraint affect all young people, although records confirm that the frequency of restraints has reduced over time. Categorisation of different levels of intervention has been implemented; however on average recognised holds are still used to restrain young people nearly three times each week. Records of these restraints do not fully comply with regulations. Details of all required elements are not recorded in one volume. This affects the ability of managers and staff to

consistently review the use of restraints, learn from previous incidents and reduce their use further.

Various factors do help to protect young people in relation to behaviour management. Sound policies are in place. Staff are properly trained in recognised techniques to de-escalate and restrain. Restraint is only ever used to prevent injury to people or serious damage to property. The director responsible for undertaking monthly monitoring visits regularly reviews existing records relating to the use of restraint.

Young people clearly say that they feel safe. They confidently list staff they would talk to if they had a problem or difficulty. Individual young people benefit from robust risk assessments that identify potential risks and protective measures. Young people are kept safe online by appropriate software and constant staff supervision in the computer area. All safety checks within the home are completed and up to date.

Since the last inspection there have been no occasions when young people have gone missing. An agreed protocol exists with the local police should this occur in the future. Links with personnel within the local police exist. Young people responded positively when the police visited previously. However, the frequency of visits has reduced due to limited need for contact.

Young people are constantly encouraged to express their thoughts, feelings and opinions. This ethos of open communication helps minimise any incidences of bullying. Young people do not report this as a problem.

Considerable care is taken to ensure recruitment processes for all new staff are thorough. Difference and diversity is welcomed to increase the awareness young people have for the cultural diversity of the local community.

Young people confirm that there are electronic buzzers to alert staff when their bedroom doors open at night. This impacts upon the privacy of young people. Managers say this equipment is used to safeguard young people. The use of such monitoring is not referred to in young people's care plans and the consent of placing authorities has not been formally obtained.

Leadership and management

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

A detailed Statement of Purpose exists which sets out the current aims objectives and facilities of the home. This is reviewed regularly. The Registered Manager is aware of the need to forward any amended documents to Ofsted. Information is set out clearly for placing authorities, families and staff. Information is provided for young people through a children's guide. This is a long and wordy document. Young people do not benefit from information in different formats or more accessible language.

An experienced Registered Manager remains in post. The continuity they have brought over the past five years benefits the young people living in this home. Young people recognise the Registered Manager's authority and actively seek her opinion on matters that are important to them. Staff value the leadership and consistency the Registered Manager brings to the home. Directors also play an active role in the management and oversight of the home. To improve the service provided to young people, changes to the management structure and responsibilities have recently been introduced. Deputy managers now play an increased role in day to day management of the home. This enables them to develop their skills and experience while freeing the Registered Manager to take a more strategic role. The Registered Manager remains accessible to young people.

There have been no complaints from neighbours since the last inspection. The Registered Manager has worked hard to develop relationships over the years and remains in regular contact with those living closest to the home.

There is evidence that the home remains financially viable. The home is well resourced. Young people benefit from high levels of staff on duty at all times. This results in young people receiving individualised care and support. Independent reviewing officers confirm that staffing ratios increase when required.

Young people are cared for by staff who are well qualified and appropriately supported. All staff receive regular supervision and appraisal. New staff complete a comprehensive induction. At the conclusion of their probation period they are registered for the formal qualification stipulated in the national minimum standards. Regular updates of core training are delivered, ensuring that knowledge and practice are kept up to date. Staff recognise the challenges they face and are extremely complimentary about the level of formal and informal support they receive from managers and directors.

Records are comprehensive and provide insight into the lives of young people. The privacy of young people is maintained through keeping personal information safe. Managers and staff maintain positive relationships with relevant professionals and outside agencies. The interests of young people remain central to the work of the home. When necessary, notifications to outside agencies are made efficiently.

Monitoring reports help managers to identify strengths and areas of weakness in services for young people. However, there is no formal development plan in place to highlight how the service provided to young people will improve over the next year.

At the last inspection one requirement was made requiring that copies of reports reviewing the quality of care be sent to Ofsted. No report was received prior to this inspection, although reviews did take place regularly during this period. Two reports have been completed since the last inspection, but none were submitted as required. This administrative shortfall has negligible impact upon young people.

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.