

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Sandra Jacobs-Walls
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This registered children's home provides services for six young people, of either gender who may have emotional or behavioural difficulties.

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**.

This home is generally well managed and staff work positively to ensure the safety and well-being of the young people. The relationship between staff and young people is good and this helps sustain placements. The young people are largely making good progress given their starting points when initially admitted to the home.

Young people live healthy lifestyles and their behaviour is generally good. Staff's use of restraint is rare and sanctions are fairly and appropriately imposed. Staff's promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Young people's educational achievement is poor despite staff's efforts to support and encourage young people's engagement with education and training.

Staff have a clear understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities and young people feel safe in placement at the home. Young people know that any issues or concerns will be dealt with appropriately by staff and they receive clear information about making complaints. Bullying is not an issue for the home. The frequency that young people are absent without permission or are deemed missing is high but in recent months this trend has declined.

Young people's case records are well maintained containing a good account of their life history. Staff work in effective partnership with other professionals which enhances the likelihood of placement success.

The young people live in a safe and secure environment and their care is provided by a team of staff who are committed to safeguarding their welfare. Managers monitor the home's functioning and are keen to improve service delivery and outcomes for

young people.

This inspection notes some shortfalls. These include improvements in young people's educational achievement, the timely completion of staff appraisals and staff's completion of formal training. The home's monitoring systems need improvement and some key policies require revision. These shortfalls however, do not impact negatively on outcomes for young people.

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
18 (2001)	promote the educational achievement of young people accommodated in the home (Regulation 18 (1))	01/10/2012
34 (2001)	shall establish and maintain a system for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals (Regulation 34 (1) (a))	03/09/2012
27 (2001)	ensure that all persons employed receive appropriate appraisal (Regulation 27 (4) (a))	03/09/2012
27 (2001)	ensure that all persons employed receive appropriate training. (Regulation 27 (4) (a))	03/09/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the home's child protection procedures are revised to be in line with Government Guidance. In particular to identify the organisation's designated person responsible for the management of any allegation (NMS 20.2)
- submit the home's child protection procedures to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board and to the Local Authority Designated Officer for consideration (NMS 20.4)
- ensure visits of the home carried out under Regulation 33 include records of missing person's reports (NMS 21.8)
- ensure the staff disciplinary procedures clearly separates staff disciplinary processes from child protection enquiries. (NMS 17.7)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

The outcomes for young people are fair while in placement at the home. Young people receive individual care that meets their needs as outlined in their placement and care plans. Placements are well sustained and young people accept the contribution staff have made to their general development.

Young people are generally aware of the objectives of the placement and they have good knowledge and understanding about their backgrounds. Their identity needs are well addressed by the service.

Young people live healthy lifestyles while in placement. They are promptly registered and have good access to primary health care services and any specialist services as required. They enjoy healthy diets and food they prefer. Meals offered meet cultural and religious obligations. Young people have access to good mental health services, which ensure their emotional well-being is satisfactory. Young people also participate in a range of physical activities that facilitate exercise.

Current residents of the home are not achieving academically as expected as most young people are not engaged in any education or training opportunities. This is a clear weakness of the service. Some young people indicate education is not a priority for them despite staff's keen efforts to support them fulfil their educational potential. Other young people do attend school and are making fair progress.

Young people's contact arrangements with their family and friends are supported by staff, and young people benefit from the continuing links with their significant others. These arrangements are subject to any limitations set out in care plans. Young people enjoy the home's flexible attitude towards the visitation of friends and understand any boundaries are in place to ensure their safety.

Young people are supported by staff to complete simple household chores and attend to personal hygiene and self-care skills. This enhances their independence and helps develop practical life skills. The home's premises are comfortable, safe and secure.

Quality of care

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

Young people share good, trusting relationships with staff. Young people receive personalised care that helps them develop their self-confidence and to deal with the issues that affect their emotional well-being. Young people benefit from the home's key work system which ensures there is an identified worker who is responsible for working with them on achieving placement objectives. One young person said of staff, 'They treat us well and try their best. My key worker speaks with me regularly, and I can speak with any staff I want. I've built up trust with staff whilst I've been here'.

Staff of the home are keen to solicit the opinions and feelings of young people. Staff conduct regular key work sessions that focus on placement objects and other placement issues. Young people have good opportunities to share their views and feel that staff are genuinely interested in their opinions. Young people and staff engage in dialogue constantly and weekly formal resident meetings are held. This acts to offer young people further opportunity to share their views about the service and its operation.

Staff are aware and respond effectively to young people's challenging and risky behaviour. Staff devise relevant risk assessments that include strategies to combat unacceptable behaviour. These are largely effective as in recent months the frequency of critical incidents and risky behaviour has reduced.

Young people understand how complaints are made as they receive relevant information at the start of their placement. The home has received no complaints against the service for some time. Staff encourage young people to speak openly about any dissatisfaction they may have with the service.

The home's referral and care planning process is robust. Staff ensure that they receive and document comprehensive background information about young people's histories as part of placement negotiations. This is important to ensure that all parties are in agreement with placement objectives and how these are to be achieved. Staff ensure that young people's identity needs are well met by the service, this is particularly the case for young people who are committed to actively practising their chosen faith. Staff provide personalised, individualised care to young people that is in accordance with care and placement plans to ensure their identified needs are well met.

Young people live healthy lifestyles while in placement. Staff ensure young people are promptly registered with primary care services and that each young person has a health plan on file. Staff keep good records of all health care and medical issues, ensuring that appointments and treatment outcomes are well documented. Young people benefit from having good access to specialist health care services as required. These include sexual health clinics and drug and alcohol preventative services. Staff routinely liaise with the looked after children's nurse for advice and support and to ensure health care assessments are kept current. Staff monitor young people's immunisation histories to ensure these are also kept updated. Staff work closely with local mental health services to ensure young people's psychological health needs are met. Staff receive training in food hygiene, first aid and the administration of medication. This training ensures staff health care practices help keep young people safe.

Staff ensure that young people receive well-balanced, nutritional and varied meals. Young people enjoy meals they prefer and confirm that the home offers ample choice at mealtimes. As required, staff provide culturally appropriate meals that cater for young people's cultural and religious needs. So, for example, staff ensure that young people of the Muslim faith have access to Halal prepared meat and are not

offered pork. Staff encourage young people to participate in activities that promote physical exercise such as paintballing, go-karting and badminton.

The home views young people's educational achievement as a priority. Despite this however, young people generally do not achieve educational success; most of the home's current residents are not engaged in education or training opportunities. This is a significant weakness of the service. Staff work in close collaboration with educational professionals to identify appropriate educational resources for individual young people. Case files contain an educational section that evidence staff's efforts to promote creative learning opportunities. Young people's key work sessions and statutory reviews routinely explore issues pertaining to their education. Despite this effort, most young people currently living at the home refuse to participate in identified educational activities and so continue to fail to meet their educational potential. This is not in the best interest of young people.

The home is appropriately located, designed and is well maintained. The organisation has good systems in place to ensure the home is comfortable, well decorated and furnished.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people indicate that they feel safe in placement and with the staff group. Staff relationships with young people are positive and young people are clear who to approach if they felt unsafe. Young people have access to useful information about the home's complaints procedure and independent bodies available to advocate on their behalf. Young people are clear that bullying is not an issue for the home. The home's premises are physically safe and appropriately secure and young people feel safe in their surroundings.

The staff group are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and they have completed appropriate child protection training which is facilitated by the host local authority. Staff have access to clear child protection policies and procedures which inform and support staff practices. These policies however are yet to be shared with the local authority as outlined in the national minimum standard 20.4. There are adequate policies and procedures in place to address the management of allegations. These however, require some revision. In particular, to identify the organisation's designated person, responsible for the management of any allegation. The home's staff disciplinary policies also require revision to include information about the policies links with its child protection procedures. This is outlined in national minimum standard 17.7. The home's staff group demonstrate a good understanding of child protection policies and procedures. There have been no allegations made against the service since the last inspection.

Young people benefit from staff's good understanding of policies and procedures that address young people who are absent without authority or are deemed missing. In recent months the frequency of these incidents have been high, of late however, the

number of incidents involving young people who are absent has reduced. Young people themselves are familiar with action taken by the home when they are missing. They benefit from clear protocols between staff of the home and relevant police teams in an effort to quickly identify their whereabouts and influence their safe return home. Staff maintain consistent records of all instances where young people are absent without permission or are missing and of action taken.

Staff encourage young people's positive behaviour and have access to clear behaviour management policies and procedures to support practices. Staff devise individual risk assessment and behavioural management plans to alert them to potential risk and triggers of challenging behaviour. These plans are appropriately detailed and offer staff strategies to combat unacceptable behaviour. These strategies are largely effective as critical incidents are kept to a minimum. Young people have a clear understanding of staff's use of imposed sanctions and generally feel these are fairly imposed. Staff documentation of imposed sanctions is consistent and proportionate to the impact of the offending behaviour.

Staff receive training in conflict resolution and physical intervention. Restraint techniques are used with young people in instances where significant risk to safety are posed. Staff's use of restraint is rare in the home and records are in compliance with new legislation. Since the last inspection there have been no incidents involving the use of restraint.

Staff working in the home are carefully selected and vetted to ensure they are suitable to work with young people. The organisation's recruitment practices are supported by clear written policies and procedures. The vetting procedures for staff members are robust, staff files evidence full vetting information as required.

The home is physically a safe environment for the young people and staff. There are suitable windows in all rooms with restricted openings and entrance doors are equipped with locks to prevent unauthorised entry. All required safety checks on fire, gas, electrical and domestic appliances have been carried out. Staff ensure that fire drills are regularly undertaken. These measures ensure the safety of everyone living and working at the home. The home is equipped with CCTV. This acts to provide further security for the home's premises.

Leadership and management

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

The management of the home is satisfactory. Managers of the home are committed to ensuring that young people are well cared for and that the home is operating efficiently. The home's manager has been in post for a few months and is in the process of being registered with Ofsted. The manager has extensive residential child care and management experience.

The home's Statement of Purpose states clearly the aims and objectives of the service and is fully compliant with the regulations. This is also the case for the

home's children's guide, which is a useful summary of services provided by the home. The document is written in age-appropriate language for easy access to young people. All requirements and recommendations from the previous inspection have been satisfactorily resolved. The home is financially viable.

The organisation has a clear complaints policy and procedure in place which are well known to young people. Staff maintain good records of all complaints and these are managed in accordance with written guidance. Since the last inspection the service has received no complaints.

The organisation demonstrates a capacity to continually improve, however this is not well evidenced in the home's development plan. This document, in order to be effective should be better linked to the finding of the manager's monitoring reports which give a detailed overview of areas identified for improvement.

The home's monitoring systems are satisfactory and young people benefit from the home's commitment to improving its service provision. The home is subject to monthly Regulation 33 unannounced monitoring visits. These are consistently unannounced and completed on a monthly basis. However, not all areas required to be reported upon are consistently monitored by this process. This is the case for allegations, the frequency of unauthorised absences and missing persons. This is important so that trends can be easily identified in order for the home to take necessary action to resolve. The service ensures these monitoring reports and notifications are promptly forwarded to Ofsted for review. Additionally, the manager completes monthly Regulation 34 reports. These are also periodically forwarded to Ofsted for review. However, these reports are not fully compliant with all matters as outlined in Schedule 6 of the regulations. In particular details of young people's unauthorised absences and the frequency young people are deemed missing is not routinely included. This is necessary to help the service develop strategies to combat these trends and in order for the home to remain compliant with the relevant legislation.

The home's staffing numbers are sufficient to ensure the service's safe operation. The staff group are diverse in terms of gender, race and skill mix. The team is cohesive and work effectively to meet the needs of young people. Communication and support is good amongst the team and staff clearly enjoy caring for young people.

Staff are well trained to carry out their duties and a comprehensive training schedule is available for staff to improve their skills and competences. This inspection notes however, that not all staff have enrolled on the required level 3 training, which leads to the award of a formal qualification. The staff team are well supported by the home's managers. Formal supervision for staff is well established and these meetings identify their training and developmental needs. Staff appraisals however, are not completed on an annual basis as outlined in the national minimum standards.

Staff ensure that young people's information is kept confidential. The service maintains good records and obtains comprehensive, key information from placing

authorities during placement negotiations and the care planning process. This is important to establish placement goals and objectives and enhance sustained placements.

This inspection finds that despite identified weaknesses in the management of the home, the service is generally well run. Identified shortfalls in this area of the home's operation do not negatively impact on the outcomes for young people, which are satisfactory.

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.