

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Robin Whistlecraft
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is operated by a private provider and is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to of four young people with learning disabilities, two of whom may have concurrent physical disabilities.

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 provides an adequate quality of care, which involves proactive work with parents. The managers of the home have introduced a very good system for monitoring and recording progress in relation to young people's needs and placement goals. Relationships that young people have with each other and with staff are good. Young people make progress in the home and in education.

A recent episode exposed incomplete monitoring of records over time and also that staff had insufficient confidence in the home's whistleblowing scheme. Managers have reviewed this episode and identified appropriate strategies for tackling the issues raised. Despite the episode, young people say they feel safe and parents and social workers are confident about the care the home provides.

Managers understand the home's strengths and weaknesses, and have compiled an honest development plan. They have already improved the home's life story work and piloted a bespoke life skills preparation programme. They have taken some remedial action to strengthen the review of incidents and have firm plans to strengthen teamwork. Those actions, together with the new casework supervision system, demonstrate that the home has the capacity to address the necessary learning from the recent episode.

This report contains six requirements and 3 recommendations of areas for improvement. The requirements relate to revising and reviewing the statement of purpose; improving the recording of the measures of control that are used;

improving the external monitoring visits and reports; making sure that all checks are done on staff before they start work in the home; providing some staff training about who investigates suspected abuse; and introducing a home's system for reviewing the quality of care provided in the home.

The recommendations relate to strengthening the understanding of staff about the home's whistleblowing policy; analysing records to improve the quality of care; and improving young people's access to external activities.

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
4 (2001)	compile in relation to the children's home a written statement of purpose which shall consist of a statement as to the matters listed in schedule 1. This includes referring to current legislation and providing detail about what constitutes staff members relevant experience (Regulation 4 (1))	05/10/2012
5 (2001)	keep under review and, where appropriate, revise the statement of purpose and the children's guide (Regulation 5(a))	05/10/2012
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 the prescribed details in paragraphs (3) of this regulation (Regulation 17B (3)(b)(h))	05/10/2012
26 (2001)	ensure that, unless paragraph (6) applies, no person starts work at a children's home until such time as paragraph (3)(d) has been complied with in relation to him (Regulation 26(5)(b))	05/10/2012
33 (2001)	ensure that the person carrying out the visit shall interview such of the young people accommodated there, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home as appears necessary in order to form an opinion of the standard of care provided in the home. Also prepare a written report on the conduct of the home (Regulation 33(4)(a)(c))	05/10/2012
34 (2001)	establish and maintain a system for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals and improving the quality of care provided in the children's home. The system... shall provide for consultation with children accommodated in the home, their parents and placing authorities (Regulation 34 (1)(3))	05/10/2012
27	ensure that all persons employed by him receive appropriate	05/10/2012

(2001)	training, supervision and appraisal. This is in relation to staff knowledge of roles and responsibilities for initiating and investigating abuse. (Regulation 27 (4)(a))	
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Recommendations

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

- ensure there is a whistleblowing policy which is made known to all staff. This makes it a clear duty for such people to report to an appropriate authority any circumstances within the home which they consider likely to significantly harm the safety, rights or welfare of any child in the home (NMS 16.7)
- ensure that young people have access to a wide range of positive activities so they are able to enjoy and achieve success. This is in relation to enabling the resident group to go out to community leisure facilities more often (Volume 5, statutory guidance, para 2.127)
- ensure there is a system in place to monitor the matters in Schedule 6 in order to identify any trends and issues of concern so that those involved in running and working in the home can continually improve the quality of care they are providing. This is in relation to systematically reviewing, evaluating, and applying lessons learned from the monitoring carried out under Regulation 34 and preparing associated reports. (Volume 5, statutory guidance para 3.14)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Some young people develop self-confidence and improved social skills while in this home. The home helps them understand the transitions that are happening in their lives. Other young people make progress because staff help identify the physical causes of behavioural problems. This means that they are more settled. Staff help young people to remember events and friends by compiling life-story books for them. Young people make new friends in the home and develop positive attachment to the home. Some young people call it their home.

Young people enjoy good health. Where they need specific medical support, they receive it. A social worker said 'They are definitely proactive in addressing health needs immediately.' Young people attend education regularly and make good progress in school. They celebrate their school achievements in the home.

Young people receive support to express their views and wishes for decisions in case reviews. They make a positive contribution to the home by being involved in choices about food, leisure trips and holidays and the décor in their bedrooms.

Young people benefit from regular contact with their families and from extra support

if contact is challenging for them.

Young people are helped to prepare for moving to adult care services by positive life skills development programmes that staff individually tailor to meet their needs and abilities.

Quality of care

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

Young people experience positive relationships with other people in the home. Staff and young people interact in a friendly and relaxed manner. Young people say they like the staff and that they like the home. Staff describe how one young person has engaged other young people in play and conversations who, until recently, had tended towards lone activities

Staff help young people influence the running of the home through individual and group discussions about food, activities, special events and décor. Young people have individual plans and there are individual strategies for addressing specific needs and behaviours. Staff take time to ensure young people understand about appropriate behaviour and explain the need for particular boundaries. A social worker commented that, 'The environment is quite liberal and relaxed.' Young people who are able to communicate, know that they can raise concerns with staff and staff help them to do this. Staff monitor the behaviour and demeanour of young people who cannot communicate for known indicators of unhappiness or discontentment. This means that young people benefit from care that promotes their well-being.

The home works well with young people's parents in order to promote contact, ensure they are kept informed and to make sure the home has information about young people's needs. A social worker said the home tries to build relationships even during times of difficulty, 'They have been absolutely brilliant'

Young people are cared for in line with their placement plans. The home's managers have introduced a new casework supervision system. The system provides a systematic and focused tool that key workers and managers use to set and track clear and realistic targets. This means that the home provides easily accessible information about current work with young people.

Staff celebrate achievement in education and communicate daily with schools by a home-school diary. Staff occasionally spend time in school in order to observe the schools strategies for managing young people that present particular challenges. The home has recently provided specific training in a particular type of pictorial communication aid, to help staff communicate with young people who use this system in school. This welcome initiative recognises a deficit that impaired the home's ability to promote some young people's welfare effectively.

Staff understand the home's systems for safe and effective administration of medicines. Young people benefit from access to a range of health services, both

routine and specialist.

Young people have access to community based leisure activities such as school based youth clubs. However, there are limits on the opportunities available to young people as there is not a vehicle available to transport the group. Instead, the home hires a vehicle every few weeks. At other times, staff use their own vehicles to take individual young people to activities operated by other agencies.

Young people's plans include information about their diverse needs in addition to their disabilities. The home supports cultural and religious needs through attention to diet and enabling young people to attend religious festivals.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Interactions between staff and young people are warm and friendly. Parents and social workers are confident that young people are safe in the home. A parent described young people returning from school running up to staff and hugging them. These examples indicate that young people feel safe.

Young people do not go missing from this home. The home carries out individual risk assessments that address particular situations, particular equipment and particular behaviour. The home introduces individual control measures to minimise or respond to particular risks as necessary. This illustrates a general concern to find ways to improve young people's experiences.

The home now carries out the appropriate vetting checks on staff before they start working with young people, having not done so in the past on a very few occasions. Nevertheless, the shortfalls mean that the home's practice fell short of that required to safeguard young people.

The home has minimised the use of physical restraint, and achieved a significant reduction in its use. The home has carried out an exercise to identify triggers or circumstances that might be adversely affecting some young people's behaviour. The home found specific associations that it successfully addressed and overcame. However, the home's management do not routinely look for patterns and trends in the use of physical restraint. Consequently, managers miss the opportunity to identify and intervene if trends become unusual. The manager has revised the format of the home's incident record so that each record now requires the manager to comment about the incident. This means that young people now benefit from closer management oversight.

Staff understand child safeguarding procedures. They are clear that allegations or suspicions of abuse require external investigation. However, some are not aware that it is the local area safeguarding officer's responsibility to initiate the investigation. A recent episode in the home has revealed that staff were less aware of their individual

responsibilities under the home's whistleblowing procedures. It is clear, however, that staff have learned from this experience and that managers have realistic plans to address the episode and the particular learning that needs to take place for the home. Some young people's social workers have concluded that the home managed the situation that evolved well. A social worker said about the episode 'They contacted the right people, shared their concerns, staff came forward.'

Leadership and management

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

The home has a statement of purpose that is clear about the purpose and goals of the home. Unfortunately, it includes, in some places, references to out-of-date legislation. This indicates, that the document is not keep the document under review. The statement of purpose also gives insufficient detail about the relevant experience that staff have.

The provider ensures that there are regular external monitoring visits made to the home. However, the reports indicate that the visitor often does not observe or talk with young people. The reports completed by the visitor also fail to offer a general conclusion about the conduct of the home. The provider has also chosen to incorporate regular checks of a range of records with the independent monitoring visit. Unfortunately, the checks do not examine the full range of records that the registered person is required to monitor. Nor are those checks integrated into a system for reviewing the records for trends and patterns, then using findings to improve practice in the home. This means that young people do not benefit from effective independent monitoring of the care that they receive.

The home maintains records of the use of physical restraint and of disciplinary measures. Some entries do not provide enough detail about the behaviour of the young person leading to the measure. However, in those cases staff have cross-referenced the record to another record where there is the necessary detail. This means that the shortfall does not adversely affect young people. The record of the use of physical restraint also omits a space to record that both the young person and the member of staff have been spoken to about the event. However, staff compile an incident report about the same events and these contain information about the young person's response and any subsequent conversation, behaviour or reactions. This again means that the shortfall does not adversely affect young people.

There are sufficient staff in the home. They receive regular core training and supervision, and some staff have received additional training in specialisms that are relevant to the purpose of the home.

Young people's personal files are stored securely and are clear and up-to-date. The introduction of the case work supervision system records provide a detailed record of the work of the home to meet young people's needs and placement goals. This greatly helps provide an understanding of the young person's life in the home.

The home appropriately notifies other agencies of significant events. The home fosters positive relationships with other agencies. One social worker said, 'They are like a breath of fresh air, really good at building relationships. They are good at getting on with other professionals. They are proactive.'

Managers have fully addressed three recommendations from the last inspection, and have partly addressed the fourth. The provider maintains the home adequately and the home is homely, comfortable and welcoming. The home has provided a computer for the young people. Staff now receive regular personal supervision as well as organised case work supervision. The manager checks incident records individually but none of the home's records benefit from collective or routine monitoring over time in order to identify patterns and trends.

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.