

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Anna Williams
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The service is a two-bedded children's home registered for boys with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

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 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 children's home provides children with an adequate quality of care. Strengths of the service include effective therapeutic support which helps children to understand their backgrounds and plan their futures. Individualised plans support children to make adequate progress from their starting points. Children feel safe in the home. Children are positive about the care they receive in the home. Relationships between children and staff are warm and appropriate. However, the current staffing arrangements do not provide a sustainable continuity of care for young people.

The quality of care in the home has improved because the service has taken action to meet the majority of the significant regulatory requirements identified at the last inspection. This has included the appointment of a new manager. There is a comprehensive development plan in place. This suitably focuses on further improving the quality of care within the home.

However, there continue to be shortfalls in the way managers review the quality of care and record sanctions, but not have a negative impact on the welfare or safety of children. Shortfalls identified within this inspection relate to some children's records which have gone missing when removed from the home. This may compromise young people's confidentiality and means that some children do not have a complete

record of their placement within the home. Incidents which involve calling the police for assistance with challenging behaviour are high. This risks criminalising children unnecessarily and there is no policy guidance for staff to follow about police involvement.

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
17B (2001)	ensure a written record of any measure of control includes- the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure (Regulation 17B (3) (f))	22/10/2012
34 (2001)	ensure the system in place to review and improve the quality of care includes consultation with children accommodated in the home, their parents and placing authorities. (Regulation 34 (3))	22/10/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure the home's approach to care minimises the need for police involvement to deal with challenging behaviour and avoids criminalising children unnecessarily. The home follows procedures and guidance on police involvement in the home, which have been agreed with local police (NMS 3.22)
- ensure every effort is made to achieve continuity of staffing so that children's attachments are not overly disrupted (NMS 17.8)
- ensure staff follow the home's policy for the keeping and retention of files, managing confidential information, and access to files (including files removed from the premises). (NMS 22.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Children make sound progress in building self-esteem and emotional resilience through effective therapeutic support. This supports children to understand their individual backgrounds and helps them focus on future goals. Children build confidence in communicating their emotions and feelings. This helps children to cope

with significant events in their life effectively.

Children's health needs are identified and met. Children attend regular dental, optician and general medical appointments. This ensures that children's health needs are monitored appropriately. Children's emotional health needs are assessed and met through sound professional psychological support provided by the organisation. Children eat a balanced and varied diet. However, some children remain overweight. Children successfully grow vegetables in the garden. This supports their learning around healthy eating. Children receive appropriate support if they are unwell or have an accident. This ensures their safety and well-being.

Children attend the school which is run by the organisation. Children have good attendance at school and make satisfactory progress. Children take part in a wide range of off-site activities with appropriate staff supervision. They talk enthusiastically of the trips they have made. These include: a camping trip to the Isle of Wight; seeing the Olympic torch procession; beach outings; motor car museums and cinema visits. Children take part in swimming, badminton club and football. These purposeful activities provide children with opportunities to exercise, make new friends and socialise.

Children maintain contact with family and people in their lives who are important to them. Contact is suitably facilitated and supervised by staff. Some children have successfully started contact with significant people for the first time in some years. This ensures children benefit from appropriate contact with family, friends and others of significance.

Children engage well with daily living tasks around the home. They follow a weekly rota of everyday jobs which include cleaning, laundry and helping to prepare meals. This supports them to learn practical skills which helps them now and in preparation for adult life.

Quality of care

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

Children and staff enjoy warm and constructive relationships. Children talk positively about staff in the home. They take part in house meetings which gives them the opportunity to raise issues or concerns about living in the home. Through these meetings, children influence change in household decor, activity choices and menu planning. Children know how to make a complaint. Since the last inspection, one complaint has been received. This was suitably investigated and appropriate actions taken. These processes show children their views are valued and listened to.

Children are cared for in line with their individual placement plans. Children's unique needs are identified and met through their day-to-day care. Needs relating to children's personal backgrounds and cultures are suitably recognised and addressed.

Staff successfully engage children in taking part in activities both within the home

and in the wider community. This supports children's involvement in purposeful and enjoyable pursuits.

Medication systems are safe and effective. Staff work pro-actively and regularly with children to help them understand the benefit of healthy lifestyles. This ensures children receive sound advice on health issues and are encouraged to make appropriate choices.

Staff work together with children and teachers to ensure individual educational goals are identified and to monitor progress made. Staff suitably support children within the home with their educational achievement and projects. Regular meetings between children, residential and educational staff ensure clear communication between the settings. This ensures children's educational achievement is positively promoted within the home.

This home is near to local shopping and leisure facilities and public transport routes. This supports children being actively involved in their local community. The home's decoration is bright and comfortable. Recent redecoration of communal space enhances the home environment. Children like their bedroom space and personalise it appropriately. The gardens provide an outdoor play area and space to relax. The home is subject to an on-going maintenance programme. This ensures children live in a home which is adequately furnished and suitably maintained.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children say they feel safe living in the home. Incidents of bullying within the home are suitably addressed by staff and appropriate actions taken to protect children. There have been no incidents of children missing from the home since the last inspection. Local police protocols regarding missing procedures are in place, and currently under review. Incidents of challenging behaviour have reduced significantly over recent weeks. However, a high level of previous incidents involved the local police being called in order to deal with situations staff felt were unsafe. This risks criminalising children unnecessarily. There is no policy for staff to follow which guides them on police involvement.

Children know the rules of the home. Token systems in place reward positive behaviour. The use of sanctions is low. However, the records does not capture the effectiveness of the sanctions. This does not support senior staff in their monitoring of sanctions to evaluate if they are successful.

Children are proactively involved in the recruitment process of new staff to the home. This demonstrates to children that their views are important. Systems in place to select and vet staff are safe and effective. This ensures the safety of children. Children are protected by sound health and safety routines and checks. Children know what to do in case of an emergency. Effective maintenance systems ensure the home remains physically safe for children and all who visit.

Leadership and management

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

Since the last inspection the home is better organised and there have been improvements in the quality of care. The majority of the requirements from the last inspection have been addressed. Also, the home has a comprehensive development plan in place. This suitably focuses on further improving the quality of care within the home. Medication administration systems have been reviewed since the last inspection. Records kept are now accurate and are effectively audited on a regular basis. Staff have recently completed medicine administration training. These practices ensure children's medical needs are now fully met. Accident records are now robustly kept. Children now receive appropriate medical support and guidance following challenging incidents. This ensures children's safety.

The home operates a non-restraint policy and records demonstrate that this policy is now being adhered to. Records of sanctions given are now accurate. This supports the senior staff in monitoring consequences to ensure they are fair and reasonable. Investigations into suspicions of harm or abuse are now suitably shared with the Local Authority Designated Officer. This practice is now in line with the organisation's child protection procedures, and this safeguards children.

The home has not has stable or consistent leadership because there has been no permanent Registered Manager. Positively, a manager was very recently appointed. Their application to become Registered Manager has not yet been received by Ofsted. However, they are still within timescales to submit their application.

The Statement of Purpose has been updated and now contains information relating to the qualification and experiences of staff working in the home. The home is now working consistently in line with its Statement of Purpose. This ensures placing social workers, and parents have up-to-date information and that the home is working to the aims and objectives as outlined within the Statement of Purpose.

Staff are sufficient in number to meet the needs of children on each shift. The monitoring of staff hours has improved. Consequently, staff are no longer undertaking excessively long working weeks. This ensures children are cared for by staff who receive appropriate days off and are suitably rested. However, due to the lack of a consistent core staff team within the home, there are a large number of different staff who have worked in this small setting since the last inspection. This practice compromises children's attachments.

Staff now receive robust supervision and appraisal. Staff have recently completed health and safety and first aid training. This ensures children are cared for by competent and well-supported staff. One previous requirement to provide behaviour management training has not been met. However, all staff are booked to attend de-escalation training next month.

Significant events are appropriately reported to Ofsted and other relevant parties. Children's individual files now contain all documentation as outlined within regulation and are up-to-date. Records kept permanently within the home are stored securely. Individual children's 'day notes' books contain residential and educational daily reports and travel with children to and from school. Some of these books have been lost and have not been found. This breaches data protection and means that some children do not have a complete record of their placement and progress within the home.

Internal systems for monitoring the quality of care have been fully revised. Regulation 33 visits are now more comprehensive and challenging. Regulation 34 reports are completed six-monthly and now contain evaluation and action points for further improvement. However, the Regulation 34 report does not contain consultation with children, social workers or parents regarding the quality of care. This does not promote learning from feedback in order to improve the care given to children.

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.