

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Rebecca Sharp
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is operated by a private company. It is registered to accommodate up to six young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties and will provide placements for single sex occupancy only.

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 are valued as individuals within the therapeutic community setting of the home. Plans for their care are highly personalised and promote constructive outcomes in all areas of young people's lives. Young people are positive about living at the home and about the experiences they have had. Risk management is dynamic and allows for age appropriate risks to be taken, allowing for personal growth and development. It is clear that the quality of care has had an exceptional impact on each young person's progress. Young people's welfare is central and there is a strong focus on developing emotional health through effective therapeutic care provided by skilled and trained staff. Academic achievements are celebrated and young people have made good progress from their starting points.

Staff have a good knowledge and understanding of safe working practices. Young people say they feel safe in the home. Staff are extremely competent in managing young people's behaviour. Young people are clear about the expectations of the therapeutic community and have a considerate and respectful approach to the staff. Boundaries are consistently and reasonably reinforced. Sanctions are used sparingly and physical restraint is used to protect young people from harm and injury.

The leadership and management of the home is strong. All staff are highly committed to the young people and create an environment which is considerate and encouraging. This support is greatly influential in young people's emotional development. Staff have high aspirations for young people and young people describe the difference between this home and their previous placements as being, 'I

feel like the staff actually care about me here.'

Shortfalls found through the inspection process largely concern recording practice which has minor impact 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
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline, a written record is made which includes the date, time and location of, the use of the measure (Regulation 17B (3) (d))	17/12/2012
22 (2001)	ensure that electronic monitoring devices for the surveillance of children are not used in a children's home except for the purpose of safeguarding and the child's placing authority consents to the use of the measure (Regulation 22 (1) (a))	17/12/2012
28 (2001)	maintain in respect of each child who is accommodated in a children's home a record in permanent form of documents specified in Schedule 3. Paying specific regard to records of sanctions and restraints, every school report received, the date and result of any statutory review, and details of any immunisations the child has received (Regulation 28 (1) Schedule 3 (13) (16) (19) (22))	17/12/2012
34 (2001)	ensure the registered person supplies a copy of any review of the quality of care of the service, to Ofsted, and that the system provides for consultation with children, their parents and placing authorities. (Regulation 34 (2) (3))	17/12/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure where any sanctions, disciplinary measures or restraint are used, children are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records kept by the home. (NMS 3.18)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

From their point of admission to the home, most young people have made considerable progress. They develop emotional resilience and gain confidence in their skills as a result of the support and stability the home provides. Staff are extremely competent in helping young people develop educationally and socially. Young people benefit from long-term placements which enables them to achieve positive and sustained attachments with staff, peers and friends in the local community.

Young people are reintegrated successfully back into the learning environment, often after long periods of absence. Some young people have made exceptional progress, both in educational attainment and attendance. For others, maintaining their placement in mainstream school has been their major achievement. In these cases, this has enabled the young people to develop a positive self-view and confidence in their skills and abilities. When young people do not have any allocated education provision the home advocates on their behalf to try and resolve the situation. This limits any negative impact on young people's academic outcomes. School reports are not always held on young people's files and therefore this does not give an accurate picture of current levels of attainment in order to measure progress.

Relationships between staff and young people are extremely positive and behaviour is mostly good. Young people do not place themselves at risk by going missing, and risk taking behaviours have reduced for some individuals, as has offending behaviour. For some young people, their level of emotional crisis is extremely high which has warranted the use of physical restraint in order to keep them and others safe. However, due to the support the young people receive in terms of crisis intervention, levels of restraint have reduced over time.

Young people have a positive sense of belonging in the local community. Within the grounds of the home there is an allotment where young people help staff to cultivate their own vegetables; the young people sell whatever is not used by the home to the local community or donate some to local residential homes for the elderly. Young people are encouraged to make friends and maintain relationships. Staff support them to develop their own risk management strategies in order to keep themselves safe while out with friends.

Young people achieve a realistic understanding of independence and develop skills and knowledge to prepare them for a successful transition into adulthood. This is done at a pace they are comfortable with and they are supported devotedly by the home. This support is then extended following a young person's departure from the home, where staff state, 'We are only doing what any good family would do and keep that level of support up.'

Young people take part in activities, holidays and hobbies in the community. Through these activities, they become confident and cement relationships with the staff and their peers. Young people enjoy a healthy lifestyle and take responsibility for some of

their own medical health needs. Their health needs are met well. However, details of childhood immunisations are not routinely recorded. This does not provide a full picture of young people's health history. However, the impact on young people is minimised as they are registered with general practitioners and receive routine statutory health assessments. Collectively these systems ensure young people's health needs are met.

Contact with family and friends is placed in high regard by the home. The service appreciates the importance of these attachments in young people's emotional development. The home provides transport and support for young people and their families to ensure contact plans are maintained. Not only does this contribute to a constructive working relationship but also ensures young people maintain crucial attachments to those who are important to them.

Quality of care

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

The home operates as a therapeutic community which allows young people to explore their feelings in a safe way with people they trust, in order to develop. This ethos promotes fruitful relationships between staff and young people, based on trust, through open and honest communication. As a result, external resources are limited to specialised areas of input and the home provides necessary support for physical, emotional and psychological health needs.

Staff are skilled in their communication with young people, especially in de-escalation. They tailor their approach to individuals to ensure young people receive appropriate emotional support. Staff genuinely and consistently have high aspirations for all young people in the home; their well-being is considered of paramount importance and is consistently placed at the forefront of staff practice. The enthusiasm of long-term staff is quickly conveyed to those who have only been in post a short while they consistently challenge barriers in order to create social and educational opportunities that enable young people to develop skills and compete on the same footing as their peers. The committed, child-focused approach of staff is clearly evident in their day-to-day practice. The home supports young people in a way to ensure the placement succeeds and they strive not to move an individual due to behaviour, but to work with them in addressing their needs.

Care planning is highly individualised and most young people recognise the contribution and involvement they have in formulating these plans. Each young person has a detailed internal placement plan which encapsulates individual needs. Their ability to influence the care planning and statutory review process results in young people expressing high levels of satisfaction with the care they receive. Similarly, young people's views significantly influence the daily running of the home. For example, through daily community meetings, there are plenty of opportunities for young people's views to influence the decisions made. It is a natural and instinctive part of staff practice to consult with young people before making a decision. Consequently, young people demonstrate a high investment in the home

and have a highly positive regard for staff. Unfortunately, minutes from statutory reviews are not always stored on file, which make plans unclear as to whether they include current, relevant information.

There have been no complaints since the last inspection. However, young people are aware of the home's complaints procedure and are confident about using the process.

The home challenges barriers to ensure the full participation of their young people in society. Individuals are encouraged to get jobs in the local community and develop socially in preparation for independent living. There is a strong focus on supporting the transition into adulthood and the home aims to ensure the young people are prepared in all areas to succeed. Young people have made successful transitions in the past, and the home maintains a significant level of support to previous residents in order to promote and maintain positive attachments.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are protected by the knowledge that staff have of the home's policies and procedures, and their consistent application of these in practice. Young people do not regularly go missing but staff are aware of the action to take to protect young people should such instances occur. Staff understand the procedures to follow if safeguarding concerns arise, including working effectively with external agencies, such as the police, social workers and Local Authority Designated Officer, to minimise risk and safeguard the welfare of young people. They are also confident in the company whistle-blowing procedure. They work to the agreed strategies and at the same time give young people the emotional support they need.

All young people feel extremely safe and protected in the home. The home provides a safe environment in which risks are carefully considered and reduced. Staff support young people to take age-appropriate risks while taking suitable precautions to keep them safe. This helps them to develop and mature into responsible young adults. Young people know about how to keep themselves safe as a result of the guidance they receive from staff. One young person said, 'I feel safe and secure here.' Electric door alarms are fitted to some bedroom doors. This allows for the safe monitoring of young people during the night when staff are sleeping. Although these alarms are not intrusive or restrictive, not all placing authorities have consented to the use of the measure. However, this is set out in the home's Statement of Purpose which all placing authorities have access to.

Young people are safeguarded by the therapeutic and proactive approach taken towards behaviour management. Staff are trained in behaviour management and physical restraint techniques, consistently applying these in practice. Staff value young people and treat them with respect. The use of praise and incentives, together with the celebration of achievements, provides young people with the additional incentive to behave appropriately.

Due to the dedicated support from staff, incidents requiring restraint are declining. This is largely as a result of the consistent approach taken by staff in educating young people to reflect on their behaviour and develop mechanisms for managing their own behaviour in times of crisis, for example, taking time away from the group. As a result young people are subject to restraint less often. However, records kept in relation to sanctions and physical restraint do not contain all the required detail. While young people are given the opportunity to discuss incidents of restraint, this is rarely recorded. Times of restraint are often omitted and these records are not routinely copied into the child's case records. This limits the manager's ability to monitor incidents of restraint. However, young people are happy with the quality of care they receive and informal verbal debriefs following incidents of restraint are common practice, which reduces any potential risks.

Leadership and management

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

An experienced and diverse management team effectively and successfully runs the home. There is a keen focus on improving outcomes for young people through consistent emotional support. Leaders and managers regularly monitor young people's progress and can demonstrate the difference the home has made in their development and success. Monitoring of the service is regular, with both internal and external checks being carried out on a monthly basis. However, the robustness of internal monitoring is lacking as parents, placing authorities and young people are not consulted as part of the review of the quality of care. This does not give a complete representation of the service provided by the home. In addition to this, internal checks are not sent into Ofsted which means, as the regulatory body, we are unable to monitor the service successfully. However, the impact on young people is minimised due to opportunities through other forums to express their views.

The home operates a therapeutic approach to caring for young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. Staff are skilled in this approach and receive appropriate training and support to fulfil their roles and responsibilities. As a result, the home has had a positive impact on young people's lives while placed here, and after they have moved on through continuing contact and outreach support.

Young people say that they are well cared for and show high levels of investment in the home. The Statement of Purpose is clear, accessible and comprehensive. Young people are clear about what the home sets out to achieve as they are given a children's guide that informs them about the service.

Young people benefit from being cared for by a staff team who themselves are supported in their work. Professional supervision, sensitivity discussions and staff meetings take place regularly. They provide opportunities for staff to develop strategies for working with young people, discuss how they are coping with the young people's behaviour and promote consistency. New staff are familiarised with the role and develop the required skills and competencies through induction training.

Most staff are, however, well experienced and suitably qualified. This translates into the delivery of good, safe care.

Significant events relating to the protection of young people are notified to the appropriate authorities by the Registered Manager so that the responsible authorities can consider whether any action, other than that already taken by the home, needs to be taken.

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.