

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Jennie Christopher
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This is a local authority children's home, providing residential care for up to six young people with emotional and 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 **good**.

Staff have high aspirations for all young people in their care and they flourish as a result. Young people have consistent support in a caring environment and their outcomes are very good. Staff work hard to form effective relationships with parents, carers, education and a wide range of specialist services, to ensure a cohesive approach to care and placement planning. Social workers comment that staff are a stable team, which benefits young people and that communication is a strong point.

Young people talk positively about the home and progress because of support from the committed and enthusiastic staff team. They are positive about their relationships with staff and feel supported to overcome barriers and challenges in their lives. Young people feel listened to and that staff are concerned for their wellbeing. They benefit from consistent boundaries in a nurturing environment.

The home's management and senior teams guide and motivate the well-trained and well-supported staff group. Young people benefit from their commitment. Young people are encouraged to come together to feel part of a group, whilst promoting a sense of community and belonging. Young people learn to value the opinions and beliefs of others. They are involved in consultation and service development through impromptu meetings at meal times for example, and through individual work.

The senior managers are striving for improvement, and are supporting the home management team to become more aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the service. There are several requirements and recommendations resulting from this inspection. These focus mainly on records and monitoring of 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
4 (2001)	compile a statement of purpose which shall consist of a statement as to the matters listed in Schedule 1 (Regulation 4(1))	31/01/2013
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose of which shall include all elements of this regulation (Regulation 17B (3)&(4))	31/01/2013
30 (2001)	ensure HMCI is notified without delay of relevant events listed in Schedule 5 (Regulation 30(1))	31/12/2012
34 (2001)	supply to the HMCI a report in respect of any review conducted by him for the purposes of monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 and improving the quality of care (Regulation 34 (2))	31/12/2012
37 (2001)	give notice to HMCI without delay the arrangements for the running of the home in the absence of the registered manager, and the name, address and qualifications of the person responsible for the home during the absence. (Regulation 37 (2)(d))	31/12/2012

Recommendations

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

- provide a comfortable and homely environment that is well maintained and decorated (NMS 10.3)
- approve and review the Statement of Purpose at least annually (NMS 13.3)
- include contact details for the Independent Reviewing Officer, the Children's Rights Director and Ofsted in the young people's guide (NMS 13.5)
- ensure all staff receive annual appraisals. (NMS 19.6)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make strong progress in all aspects of their lives as a result of living in the home. Young people develop a positive self-view and improved self-esteem through individualised placement planning and support. They are able to develop a positive understanding of who they are and their personal history and how this is affecting them now. Young people learn to develop confidence and strong attachments, enabling them to form and sustain more appropriate relationships with friends and family. All young people's health and wellbeing needs are addressed in close consultation with medical and mental health professionals ensuring they have a better understanding of healthy lifestyles and what this means for them. Young people learn to understand their risk taking behaviours and work positively towards reducing them. As a result, young people have reduced some risk taking and harmful behaviours such as self-harm and being missing from care.

Attendance in education and employment is excellent. Young people succeed and achieve in line with their peers. Those who struggle in mainstream education enjoy supportive varied packages of education and work experience. Those approaching school leaving age benefit from careers advice and support, and have successfully gained employment. Young people make a positive contribution to the home and living environment through daily chores and demonstrating an understanding about each other and their differences. They have positive friendships in the local community through school, independent time and activities such as horse riding. Staff support young people to family contact and how manage their emotions around these times.

Young people can develop an extensive range of practical skills for independent living through detailed moving-on programmes. These include household skills and budgeting, through to accessing housing and medical care. Young people who are resistant to the process have the pace of the programme adjusted to meet their needs.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy constructive and nurturing relationships with staff who are concerned for all aspects of their welfare. Young people feel comfortable in their surroundings which is reflected in the homely atmosphere and respect for each other's differences. Young people's photographs, including those who have moved on, are displayed in communal areas, continuing the sense of joint living. Listening to and letting young people express themselves is entrenched in the ethos of the service. Consultation with young people, through house meetings and individual work, ensures young people's contribute individual views and ideas. Formal house meetings can be difficult to orchestrate at times, but meal times provide a space for young people to air their views. They are supported to understand when their wishes cannot be met through individual and group work.

Young people are involved in their reviews and care planning, with most knowing

what the plan is for them. Young people know how to make complaints and forms are readily available in prominent areas. Information on how to access a range of independent support services is clearly displayed and there are robust anti-bullying procedures in place.

Staff consistently have high aspirations for young people and strive to continually meet their needs. Regular reviews of individualised care plans ensure that evolving needs are met. Plans are updated by staff, usually in consultation with young people and where appropriate, parents, social workers and other professionals. Staff support young people's educational placements with robust communication with schools. Staff communicate effectively with careers agencies, securing young people employment.

Young people generally enjoy good health with monitored use of prescribed medication. When appropriate they are able to self-administer. Mental and emotional health specialists work closely with the home to ensure consistency of approach and to support young people's emotional wellbeing. Medication is stored appropriately and there is a thorough system to ensure safety when administering. In case of emergency, there are several qualified first aiders on site at all times.

The spacious building requires some maintenance and redecoration. For example, carpet and curtains in the hall way are worn and in places there are exposed pipes. There are, however, many areas for young people to spend time in groups or alone, including games and quiet rooms.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say they feel safe and that staff keep them safe and they have someone they can go to if they are worried or concerned. Bullying of young people or staff is not tolerated and is challenged rigorously. Young people's welfare is actively promoted and staff do all they can to protect them from abuse or harm. Staff are confident in processes to follow should they be concerned for a young person's safety or welfare and are aware of local child protection procedures.

Young people being missing from care is managed appropriately and staff are aware what to do should this happen. They monitor young people to identify the likely triggers and do all they can to support the young person not to leave the home. In the event of a young person leaving, they know where they are likely to go and share this information with appropriate agencies. Close links with mental health professionals and the police further protect young people with individual robust approaches to being missing and other risk taking behaviour, such as self-harm and alcohol misuse. Debriefs with young people and gaining their views of incidents enables staff to have a better understanding of when a young person is feeling vulnerable and the triggers that might lead to risk taking behaviour. Individual files contain up-to-date photographs and descriptions of young people in case of emergency. Recruitment is managed centrally and individual checks held securely

within the home.

Individualised behaviour plans promote and reward positive behaviour through praise and small rewards. This robust approach has resulted in no restraint being used. Sanctions are appropriate and proportionate; however records lack the required detail to monitor the effectiveness and young people's feelings. A restorative approach to unwanted behaviour is used, whenever possible, enabling young people to reflect on their behaviour and consider how responses could be different in the future. Young people are safe from fire and other hazards because of thorough checks and procedures. Robust and individualised risk assessments ensure young people are able to enjoy age appropriate activities and take controlled risks.

Leadership and management

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

The provider meets the aims and objectives that are set out in the Statement of Purpose and staff fully understand the functions and ethos of the home. However, the document does not contain all relevant information and has not been reviewed at least annually. The young people's guide is easy to understand and gives an overview of the home and rights of young people. It does not contain contact details of Independent Reviewing Officers, the Children's Rights Director and Ofsted, to enable young people to have easy access to independent advocacy.

The management and senior teams have an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home through monthly monitoring of the building and records, but have not taken action to meet the regulatory shortfall identified at the previous inspection. Reports of the review of the quality of care have still not been forwarded to Ofsted.

The committed and consistent management and senior teams effectively manage the day-to-day running of the home. The structure demonstrates clear accountability, and staff know who to approach with any concerns. There have been managerial changes at the home, however, Ofsted have not been informed of these. Significant events concerning young people in the home have been reported to relevant agencies to ensure safety and prompt action. However, these incidents have not been consistently notified to Ofsted.

Young people progress because they are cared for by the consistent and enthusiastic staff team who are positive about their roles and enjoy their work. The staff team receive high quality and comprehensive training. They have quality and evaluative supervision, but not all have had their performance appraised yearly. Staff meetings and handovers between shifts ensure sharing of detailed information regarding young people and consistency in approach. The home demonstrates robust multiagency working to improve outcomes for young people. The team actively source external support such as mental health professionals and social work involvement to ensure the best possible care and outcomes for young people. The complaints procedure ensures they are handled swiftly and fairly, although there

have been no complaints. Young people's case records are clear and concise. They provide a sound basis of understanding for both staff and young people, with appropriate non-judgemental language.

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* and the evaluation schedule for children's homes.