

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Elaine Cray
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Date of last inspection	31/10/2012
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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 **adequate**.

While children and young people are looked after and their safety promoted, there is a succession of strategic and managerial shortfalls in the operation of this children's home.

A significant period of restricted financial investment in the home has impacted on the running and administration of the service. Not least, the inadequate educational provision for some of the young people educated at the service.

While shortfalls are identified as part of this inspection, the quality of care for children and young people are good. Young people are nurtured and cared for by a very committed and responsive staff team. Staff are very knowledgeable about young people's needs, personalities and complexities. They have worked extensively to attempt to compensate for the poor educational arrangements for some young people. Social workers are positive about the home and confident about young people's safety. Their comments include, 'I really rate this home,' and 'There is a good vibe about the home,' and 'absolutely safe'.

Young people value their relationships with staff and these have been a key part to their stability during some challenging periods over recent months. Young people continue to receive personalised care and therapy at this service. Their individuality is identified and there is a clear commitment to exploring and meeting young people's complex and diverse needs.

Safeguarding procedures promote sound risk and behaviour management processes. Young people's safety and risk-taking activities are closely monitored and there is good interagency liaison. Young people are provided with care and opportunities that enable them to explore emotional resilience and change behaviours.

Procedures are established but sometimes poorly implemented and monitored by the manager and the independent visitor to the home.

There are ten statutory requirements and three recommendations made as a result of this inspection.

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
5 (2001)	keep under review and, where appropriate, revise the Statement of Purpose (Regulation 5 (a))	14/06/2013
4 (2001)	update the children's guide to include a summary of the home's Statement of Purpose (Regulation 4 (3) (a))	14/06/2013
12A (2001)	make available and ensure the plan for the child's placement is agreed and signed with the child's placing authority (Regulation 12A (1))	14/06/2013
18 (2001)	promote the educational achievement of children accommodated in the children's home, in particular by ensuring that children make use of educational facilities appropriate to their age, aptitude, needs, interests and potential (Regulation 18 (1) (a))	14/06/2013
23 (2001)	ensure all parts of the home to which children have access are so far as reasonably practicable free from hazards to their safety. This is with particular regard to the testing of electrical appliances in the home (Regulation 23 (a))	14/06/2013
30 (2001)	ensure if any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 5 takes place, without delay notify the persons indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of the table (Regulation 30)	14/06/2013
33 (2001)	ensure visits under this regulation take place at least once a month (Regulation 33 (3))	14/06/2013
33 (2001)	ensure the person carrying out the Regulation 33 visit shall interview, with their consent and in private, such of the children 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	14/06/2013

	(Regulation 33 (4) (a))	
34 (2001)	ensure the system for monitoring the quality of care shall provide for consultation with children accommodated in the home, their parents and placing authorities (Regulation 34 (3))	14/06/2013
36 (2001)	ensure the registered provider carries on the children's home in such manner as is likely to ensure that the home will be financially viable for the purpose of achieving the aims and objectives set out in its Statement of Purpose. (Regulation 36.1)	14/06/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure children have access to independent advice and support from adults who they can contact directly and in private about problems or concerns, which is appropriate to their age and understanding. Children know their rights to advocacy and how to access an advocate, and how to contact the Children's Rights Director (NMS 1.5)
- 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)
- make telephone enquiries as well as obtaining written references for staff applying to work in the home. (NMS 16.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **adequate**.

Young people feel looked after, safe and supported while living at this home. They say the home is 'brilliant' and 'just like a family home'. They thrive, develop and grow in maturity. A key strength is their progress in emotional stability and resilience.

Some young people enjoy their education in local mainstream education. However, other young people attend the school attached to the home; this provision is significantly inadequate and compromises the overall progress made by young people, as well as undermines the inspection judgement made.

Unplanned and poorly measured formal education arrangements mean that some young people are unable to routinely learn. They do not enjoy the same standards of education as other young people and are therefore compromised in reaching their full potential.

Other aspects of young people's lives are greatly enhanced by the social, emotional and behavioural support they receive from staff. Young people are able to explore

how they see themselves, relate to others and manage the challenges of growing up. Young people get good support to develop independence skills and some have clear plans for their future, including jobs and careers.

Young people build and enjoy good attachments with staff. Relationships are meaningful and young people feel safe to express their past experiences, worries and goals for the future. They have also forged positive relationships with other young people living in the home.

Young people grow in confidence as they experience a strong sense of nurturing and community in the home. The strong and positive attachments are demonstrated by how positively young people and staff interact in daily community meetings. Young people are able to discuss, unravel and resolve the results of risky behaviour, impacts on others and look at different strategies. Social workers say that young people who present complex difficulties have been able to form good attachments, progress well and speak highly of the home.

While some young people experience education challenge, they say they feel good about progress they make. All young people enjoy a variety of activities. They are pleased about being part of a football team, going out with friends, improving pool skills and following interests such as fishing.

Young people feel valued because they are encouraged to express their views, feelings and wishes. They feel listened to as key workers and staff make time to talk about their interests and concerns. Young people grow in confidence because they feel their concerns are taken seriously. Young people know how to complain. They are proud that staff will stick up for them and encourage them to express how they feel about their futures.

Young people enjoy good and improved health. They are supported to understand and begin to take responsibility for their health needs. Some young people have a developing awareness about how their emotional and mental well-being is part of their health and behaviour. Young people also develop an understanding of how lifestyle choices can impact on their health. They maintain healthier lifestyles in terms of healthy eating and exercise and make clear efforts to improve personal hygiene.

Quality of care

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

Young people are consistently cared for and thrive because there are effective frameworks for care and behaviour management. These systems and the good quality of care demonstrate that all staff are consistently concerned with the welfare of young people at the service.

The majority of young people benefit from good care planning with detailed and comprehensive documentation in place. There are good working relationships with

placing authorities. However, these processes are not always supported by written placement plans obtained from the placing authority.

Young people are looked after by a competent and well-trained staff team. Their care is contemporary and individualised due to regular review and adjustment to care assessments and review of staff practice. The care framework is further improved with key working books. Young people have records that link their support to their care plans and also give meaning to their childhood experiences.

Young people invest in their care plans because plans are meaningful. Staff understand and respect how young people's challenges and experiences have impacted on them. Social workers are extremely positive about how the staff work in partnership to effectively support young people in their placement. Staff work with the young people's placing authorities to maintain safe and meaningful contact with young people's families. As a result young people benefit from a greater understanding of their backgrounds and family connections.

Young people feel cared for because staff advocate and promote their needs. Staff work tenaciously and tirelessly to navigate barriers that some young people have experienced on returning to mainstream education. They make concerted efforts to compensate for the significant lack of education provision at the service. The care staff provide an environment where young people significantly develop their social and emotional learning. Staff also make every effort to harness their own professional experience in order to promote any learning opportunity for young people.

The home promotes positive relationships between young people and staff. The concept of advocacy is valued by the staff, and young people say the staff stand up for them. The manager's attempts to develop more independent advocacy, including independent visitors, have been thwarted by financial constraints. The service is keen to develop the new and independent visitor to promote and further develop advocacy for the young people who live in the home.

The arrangements to promote and monitor health and medical needs are effectively managed. Arrangements for dealing with medication are safe and effective. There is good liaison with agencies to support young people's health needs. All young people have regular checks and staff ensure and facilitate medical and health care for young people with more specialist needs.

Young people benefit from good health care because staff explore different ways to support the mental and emotional health of young people. For example effective support in managing challenging emotional and behavioural difficulties have resulted in significant reduction in medication for some young people

Young people live in a homely environment. The standard of accommodation is improving to include a refurbished bathroom, decoration, new lighting and on-going maintenance of the home. The house is personalised and young people like choosing colours, pictures and working on art work for their walls in their bedrooms.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people benefit from good improvements in their welfare and safety. Levels of safety are effective because staff implement safeguarding strategies that are appropriate to the significant vulnerability of and levels of risk presented by the young people living at this home.

Young people say they feel safe and protected because they have good relationships with staff. Their behaviour is explored and assessed because they can talk about concerns and engage in daily therapeutic community meetings. These regular discussions highlight and quickly address any concerns about bullying. Young people's social workers expressed a clear confidence in the home's ability to keep young people safe. They say young people's awareness about their own and the safety of others is improved since being at the home.

Young people's needs are complex. Their welfare and safety is effectively addressed because the manager and staff are proactive in establishing effective links and working partnerships with agencies. Staff maintain effective links with the police, the local safeguarding children's team and mental health agencies. There are good procedures to monitor and impact on risk taking activities, including young people going missing from care.

Safeguarding strategies focus on extensive and thorough risk assessment. Staff have an excellent knowledge of how young people's previous experiences impact on and influence behaviour and the need for safeguarding strategies. Safety plans result in high levels of supervision of some young people both inside and outside the home.

Risk assessments effectively link into individual behaviour plans. Staff are trained in behaviour management, including physical intervention. There has been a significant decrease in incidents resulting in physical interventions over recent months. Young people clearly value and respond to the strongly emerging ethos of restorative and positive behaviour management. They understand and are motivated by the praise and rewards they receive for good behaviour. Young people also accept the consequences for poor behaviour as fair. However, their views are not consistently recorded in the home's records.

Young people are protected by effective staff recruitment processes, including checks on agency staff working at the home. References are obtained for all staff but telephone verification with referees is not consistently recorded in all staff files. Visitors to the home are suitably checked, vetted and monitored.

All staff are aware of their own roles and responsibilities and other agencies involved in keeping young people safe. Staff are trained in child protection, behaviour management and health and safety to effectively promote the welfare of young people.

Leadership and management

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

Young people are looked after by a dedicated and extremely committed team of staff. This home is managed by a team with a very clear vision for the service. The management and staff team has endeavoured to maintain standards over a challenging period involving a lack of financial investment. The managers in the home maintain a level of quality assurance. However these and other monitoring processes have failed to impact on significant shortfalls in the service.

External monitoring processes by the provider are inconsistent. There is a history of poor timescales in carrying out visits and submission of monitoring reports to Ofsted. Furthermore these visits and subsequent reports have not found and required redress for the developing and obvious shortfalls in the service.

The management of the home lacks strategy. As the team strive to maintain the standards of care for young people, they also fail to maintain and prioritise current standards in the administration and monitoring of the home. A statutory requirement and recommendation for the previous inspection are not fully met. For example, the Registered Manager reports that there is on-going consultation with parents. However, this is not fully evidenced within the managerial reporting process. The recommendation to reflect young people's views and signatures in their behaviour management records is also not fully met.

The home's Statement of Purpose and the young people's guide are not up to date and remain incomplete. While the provider and management team appear to have an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the service there is no established development plan.

The management and staff team are very optimistic about the new financial investment in the home. There is some positive impact in that some of the house is re-decorated and a bathroom refurbished. There are also plans to invest in another home and larger school. However, these future plans are emerging during a time when there are significant shortfalls in this service.

Young people receive good quality of care because there is a core staff team of appropriately qualified, experienced and trained staff. The staff team is well balanced with good levels of experience and competency. They are enthusiastic, work closely as a team and feel supported by the manager. Staff consistently strive to place the interests of young people at the centre of the service. The nurturing environment and staff dedication promotes a good sense of security and stability for young people.

Behaviour management is a strength in the home; young people benefit from improvements in their safety and behaviour. While significant events are well managed by the staff, these have not been consistently notified to Ofsted.

Young people live in a generally safe and secure environment. Checks are generally well managed but there is a shortfall in up-to-date electrical appliance testing.

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 the inspection of children's homes.