

## Inspection report for children's home

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<b>Inspection date</b>	01/07/2013
<b>Inspector</b>	Debbie Foster
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Full
<b>Provision subtype</b>	Children's home

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## Service information

### Brief description of the service

The children's home is run by a local authority. It is registered to accommodate up to six young people. The home provides long-term residential care to 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 **inadequate**.

There are significant shortfalls in: safeguarding, leadership and management. As a result, young people's welfare and safety is inadequate.

In some cases, staff have positive relationships with young people. Young people are able to express their views, wishes and feelings to staff. Young people feel most staff listen to them. Resident meetings enable young people to request items, make suggestions and grumble, if needed. Most young people are making good progress in their educational attendance and this in turn has brought improved academic achievements.

Staff vacancies have resulted in the use of agency staff on a frequent basis. Serious deficiencies in safe recruitment checks and training have been identified, meaning there are potential risks to young people and staff working at the home.

Insufficient action has been taken to address shortfalls and deficiencies found in the monitoring of the service. This has resulted in the quality of care in the home declining.

## 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.

<b>Reg.</b>	<b>Requirement</b>	<b>Due date</b>
11 (2001)	ensure that the children's home is conducted as to make proper provision for welfare of children accommodated there. In particular risk assessments, must demonstrate fully how risks are going to be reduced to keep young people safe (Regulation 11 (a))	26/07/2013
25 (2001)	ensure that there is at all time, having regard to the size of the children's home, the statement of purpose, and the number and need of the children accommodated there; have a sufficient number of suitably qualified, competent and experienced persons working at the children's home. In particular that agency staff are suitably trained (Regulation 25(1) (a) & (b))	26/07/2013
17 (2001)	ensure within 24 hours 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 which shall include the matters listed under paragraphs (3) and (4). In particular, record the detail of the child's behaviour leading up to the use of the measure and a description of the measure used (Regulation 17B (3) & (4)(a))	26/07/2013
26 (2001)	ensure that the registered person does not employ a person to work at the children's home unless that person is fit to work at the children's home. In particular ensuring that agency care workers recruitment checks are undertaken and recorded prior to commencement of working at the home (Regulation 26(1) (a) (b) & (2))	26/07/2013
34 (2001)	ensure the registered person establishes and maintain a system for improving the quality of care provided in the children's home. In particular that deficiencies are acted upon in a timely fashion. (Regulation 34 (1) (b))	28/08/2013

## Recommendations

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

- ensure the home contributes to the development of each children's care plan, including the pathway plan for 'eligible' care leavers and works collaboratively with the young person's social worker or personal advisor in implementing the plan. In particular, developing practical skills, including shopping, buying, cooking and keeping food (NMS 12.2)
- ensure investigations into allegations or suspicions of harm are handled fairly, quickly, and consistently in a way that provides effective protection for the child, and at the same time supports the person who is subject of the allegation.

Providers follow the framework for managing cases of allegations of abuse against people who work with children as set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children. In particular such cases are concluded in a timely manner (NMS 20.8)

- ensure all staff understand, share and implement the home's ethos, philosophy and approach to caring for children, in particular agency staff (NMS 3.4)
- ensure where children's homes use restraint, staff are trained in the use of physical restraint techniques and only use the home's agreed techniques. (NMS 3.15)
- ensure the overall number, competence and deployment of staff and number and deployment of staff, both as a staff group and on individual shifts, can fulfil the home's Statement of Purpose and meet the individual needs of all the children resident in the home (NMS 17.1)
- ensure that each child's placement plan is monitored by a key worker within the home who ensures that the requirements of the plan are implemented in full. In particular, direct work sessions must demonstrate all the work undertaken and show the progress young people are making, including areas of health, bullying, independence skills, cultural, behaviour management and substance misuse (NMS 25.2)
- ensure that young people do not identify bullying as a problem at the home (NMS 3.11)
- ensure review of incidents of challenging behaviour take place to examine trends or issues emerging from this, to enable staff to reflect and learn to inform future practice (NMS 3.21)
- ensure that the registered person makes every effort to achieve continuity of staffing so that children's attachments are not overly disrupted. No more than half the staff on duty at any one time, by day or night, at the home are to be from an external agency, and no member of staff from an external agency is to be left alone at night in the home (NMS 17.8)
- ensure that the home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well maintained and decorated. In particular that all rooms have curtains or blinds, torn and worn furnishings are repaired or replaced (NMS 10.3)
- ensure the manager regularly monitors, in line with regulations, all records kept by the home to ensure compliance with the home's policies, to identify patterns and trends. Immediate action is taken to address any issues raised by this monitoring (NMS 21.2)
- ensure all staff have access to support and advice, and are provided with regular, supervision by appropriate qualified and experience staff, in particular agency staff. (NMS 19.4)

## Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **adequate**.

Young people have experienced a difficult start in life, which has impacted on their ability to form and sustain positive attachments. Young people benefit from placement stability, good advice and support that strengthen their ability to develop positive self-esteem and emotional resilience. Most young people engage well and some have made positive attachments with key staff members and are able to talk about aspects of their life. This helps some young people gain a good understanding of their background. However, for some young people they are still on the journey to achieve this. They continue to build trusting relationships with staff, who are committed and persevering in attaining positive attachments with young people.

Young people are well supported to maintain good health. They are assisted to develop healthy lifestyles and this includes young people attending routine health appointments. All young people are registered with health professionals and have health plans. Young people identified as having mental health needs have appropriate access to services, such as the child and adolescent mental health team. Young people benefit from open and honest discussions with staff about the detrimental effect of smoking, drinking and drugs. Staff respond appropriately, offer sound support and monitor health issues. However, some young people still engage in activities which could affect their health, including smoking and substance use on occasions. As a result, this does affect the overall health outcomes for some young people.

Young people benefit from staff who place a high value on improving their life chances through education. Staff go the extra mile to ensure that young people attend their education provision. Where barriers exist within education, staff work closely with professionals to address these. Young people have access to a computer and sufficient facilities to undertake their homework. This positive practice has brought a significant improvement in school attendance and attainment for the majority of young people from their starting points. This will have a positive impact on available opportunities in the work place and in their life chances as adults. Where young people have struggled to engage with education and alternative placements, staff's perseverance continues to engage them and bring positive outcomes. Most young people understand the importance of a good education and show great learning potential, with expectations to achieve GCSEs.

Young people benefit overall from suitable support to help them develop independence skills, appropriate to their age and understanding in most instances. This includes young people part taking in domestic chores, such as keeping their bedrooms clean and tidy and processing their own laundry. Young people who are over 16 years old have a pathway plan. The plan is in good detail to support the young person. However, the recommendations made to prepare the young person for a forthcoming move have not yet been implemented. The young person is not routinely cooking or learning to budget money; a cultural mentor has not been identified to support the young person.

## **Quality of care**

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

Young people are developing constructive relationships with staff. There are difficulties with relationships between young people living at the home. This affects behaviour in the home, and a period of disruptive behaviour has taken place while young people settle in, build trusting relationships and accept boundaries. Staff, like responsible parents, have clear expectations for the young people. There is some positive engagement, respect and trust shown by some young people towards staff, which is noted in the open discussions that young people have with staff. Some young people say that they relate well with some staff more than others. Young people are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions. In particular, staff help young people to confront their anti-social behaviours.

Young people's views are sought about their care and the running of the home. This is through statutory reviews, young people's meetings, informal discussions and some key-work time. This is positive because it enables young people to have some influence and shape the way they are cared for.

Young people know how to complain. Young people have access to external professionals, such as children's rights, social workers and Regulation 33 visitor. Two formal complaints have been made since the last inspection. One complaint has been made by a young person and another from a neighbour in the community. Both have been investigated.

Young people are involved in the development of their care plans. Young people's needs, arising from their cultural background and personal identity, are identified, which promotes aspects of their diversity. Care planning is tailored to the young person's needs, interest, background and views. Placement plans are regularly reviewed and adapted to meet young people's ever changing needs to help young people develop the skills they require now and will need later in life. However, direct work for specific areas is not routinely being recorded in all identified areas; for example; bullying, cultural, independence and behaviour management. Therefore, this does not always demonstrate and evidence that all the care plan goals are being undertaken and do not indicate the progress young people are making or demonstrate where continued support from staff is still required.

Young people are supported to access services to meet their holistic health needs. Not all young people choose to access services that promote their emotional and psychological needs; however, staff continue to provide encouragement and support.

The home is clean, overall well-furnished and decorated. Young people are encouraged to take responsibility for their home and do personalise their bedrooms. The purchase of new furniture for bedrooms has enhanced young people's personal space. Recent damage to the decoration is being rectified. However, some settees are showing signs of wear and tear, with torn and damaged fabric. Curtains are missing from the dining area windows. This does not ensure a high standard of accommodation throughout the home for young people to live in.

## Safeguarding children and young people

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

Staff often have discussions with young people and talk through any identified safety or other concerns. Some young people engage and take on board safety matters which assist in them keeping themselves safer. However, some young people do not engage well and some risks to their safety and that of others remain high. Where particular risks are identified, written risk assessments are recorded to help the staff understand what action to take to minimise these risks. However, not all risk assessments adequately detail the precautions to take to enable staff to keep a young person or others safe.

The provider has safeguarding systems and procedures for staff to follow in the event of any allegation or suspicion of abuse. However, investigations into concerns are not always promptly addressed; for example, an investigation into an allegation has not been concluded in over two months.

There are positive incentives to encourage young people to behave in a socially acceptable way. Sanctions are appropriately used, proportionate to young people's age and understanding. The use of physical intervention is minimal and staff only considering restraint as a last resort. Some restraint records do not record what happened in the lead up to the event or the actual hold used.. This does not ensure that sufficient information is maintained to assist in the monitoring of these practices to protect young people. Personalised behaviour strategies are used. They contain individualised details for staff to follow when managing young people's behaviour. However, in a number of instances these have not been successful in reducing young people's challenging and, in some instances, dangerous behaviour. The police have been called to attend the home to assist. Not all staff are trained in physical intervention and behaviour management techniques. As a result, this does not ensure the use of safe practice can be implemented when circumstances arise. This significantly comprises the safety of young people and others.

Staff have protocols in place and implement when a child goes missing. Staff have taken action, including liaising with the police; searching for young people and discussing with young people the risk involved when staying out late at night. The action taken tries to reduce such events and safeguard young people's welfare. However, incidents of young people being reported missing and late returns home have not significantly reduced.

Bullying has become a concern in the home. A young person said, 'I am being bullied; staff stop this when it happens, but it been happening for some time. One young person has just moved and I feel a lot better.' Staff challenge any bullying behaviour and have spoken to all young people involved individually, to try to stop this happening. Staff have put in place some strategies to reduce and eliminate bullying. For example, close supervision between the young people involved takes



place. However, this has not eliminated this behaviour and this is affecting the daily lives of young people negatively, including their self-esteem and confidence.

The health and safety of everyone at the home is promoted by the arrangements in place for the maintenance of a safe building. Fire drills have been undertaken involving staff and young people to ensure that they know how to safely evacuate the building in the event of a fire. As a result, this ensures young people live in a physically safe home.

Not all staff undergo suitable checks before commencing working at the home. The home did not have the Criminal Records Bureau checks details, identification, references, qualifications and experience details for all the agency workers working in the home. This does not prevent unsuitable people from having access to young people and ensure their well-being and safety.

## **Leadership and management**

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

The leadership and management of the home is not effective. It has been affected by a number of short falls in the provision. These include a significant number of changes in the staff team, along with a number of staff vacancies, which the local authority have failed to fill. The staffing problems combined with the admission to the home of a group of young people in close succession with conflicting needs, challenging behaviour and significant emotional needs has affected the overall outcomes and the quality of care provided to the young people since the last inspection.

A Statement of Purpose outlines the aims and objectives of the home. Young people receive information in the children's guide to inform them about the home, prior to or on arrival. Staff read through the guide with them and young people know the home's rules.

Action has been taken to address one of the two recommendations made at the last inspection. The Registered Manager has devised an annual development and team plan. This is at an early stage of implementation after being devised. The identified areas for improvement are yet to be implemented to demonstrate better outcomes and safeguards for young people.

However, there has been a failure to implement the recommendation made at the last inspection relating to ensuring the overall number, competence and deployment of staff at the home is adequate. Young people benefit from a committed, persevering, experienced and permanent core staff team, who see their positive qualities despite the very challenging behaviours some young people may present. However, the home is frequently staffed by agency workers. On some occasions more than 50 per cent of the staff are agency workers, although these staff work alongside a permanent staff member. This does not always ensure a consistent approach in the support and care that is offered to young people who have complex

and challenging needs.

The permanent staff are trained in a wide variety of safety and childcare matters. An on-going programme of regular refresher training is provided. However, agency staff have little or no training in core safeguarding, safety, physical intervention and child care matters. As a result this does not ensure the quality of care provided is consistently of a good standard and does not ensure the welfare and safety of young people at all times.

Permanent staff do benefit from receiving regular formal supervision. They say they are well supported by the management team. However, formal supervision is not provided to agency workers in line with the home's Statement of Purpose and guidelines. Therefore, this does not consistently provide suitable support to all staff to access continuing advice and guidance in relation to their care of young people.

Monitoring of the home is inadequate. There are regular unannounced visits from the provider to monitor the quality of care and monitoring is undertaken by the manager. Reports show that action is repeatedly not taken to improve the home by the responsible individual in respect of the matters raised, for example, staff vacancies and the use of agency workers in the setting. The monitoring systems of the service are not evaluative. This does not ensure that the operation of the service is addressing deficiencies in the service to bring improvement to the quality of care for young people.

Significant events, such as, allegations made about people working at the home, child protection enquiries and serious incidents necessitating calling the police to the home, have been consistently notified to Ofsted, as required. This demonstrates that the home is implementing safeguarding responsibilities to ensure that matters have been appropriately addressed.

## 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.