

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	19/06/2013
Inspector	David Morgan / Susan Mullin
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	14/01/2013
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This is a small group home operated by a local authority. The home provides care and accommodation for two children who have emotional and/or 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 **adequate**.

This is the home's first inspection since registration in January 2013. The home provides children with a safe and supportive environment in which the overall quality of care is adequate. Children feel comfortable with staff who apply a mature and reflective approach to challenging behaviours. This environment has already fostered improvements in outcomes for children.

There are a number of areas that require improvement. To a large extent these issues are administrative and have only an indirect effect on the care of children. General monitoring is undertaken regularly and ensures that standards are maintained. However, it is lacking in evaluation and is not sufficiently clear about how standards of care are to be improved. Consultation with children in this and also certain other respects is underdeveloped. Greater rigour is necessary too in some secondary aspects of fire training and in the monitoring of the car.

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
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4 (2001)	compile a written Statement of Purpose which consists of the following matters: a description of any electronic or mechanical means of surveillance of children which may be used, and the arrangements for dealing with complaints. The latter is with specific regard to complainants from outside the home (Regulation 4(1), Schedule 1)	29/07/2013
23 (2001)	ensure that any activities in which children participate are so far as reasonably practicable free from avoidable risks. This is with regard to undertaking (and recording) vehicle checks at the intervals recommended by the manufacturer (Regulation 23 (b))	29/07/2013
24 (2001)	ensure that a written record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of the investigation (Regulation 24(5))	29/07/2013
29 (2001)	keep a record of every fire drill, with details of any deficiency in either the procedure or the equipment concerned, together with details of the steps taken to remedy that deficiency (Regulation 29 (1), Schedule 4 (6))	29/07/2013
29 (2001)	keep a copy of the staff duty roster of persons working at the children's home, and a record of the actual rosters worked. This is with regard to including the rosters worked by the manager (Regulation 29 (1), Schedule 4(11))	29/07/2013
34 (2001)	maintain a system for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6, this is with regard to it being evaluative; and, establish and maintain a system for improving the quality of care provided in the children's home. (Regulation 34(1)(a and b))	29/07/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure that staff appraisals take into account any views of children the service is provided for. (NMS 19.6)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **adequate**.

Children make clear progress overall. They have positive relationships with staff, which contribute substantially towards them remaining healthy and feeling safe. In particular, children gradually learn to reflect on their own circumstances through conversations with staff, whether it be about their backgrounds or their behaviours. They show resilience in the face of challenges and changes, and feel able to turn to staff for support.

Children are routinely involved in some aspects of the day-to-day operation of the home. This occurs at a level that is suitable to their age and abilities and affects matters such as meals and activity arrangements. Mealtimes are usually enjoyable and sociable occasions when children are involved in discussions about balanced diets and also the diets enjoyed in other cultures. This helps them understand the messages given by staff about healthy lifestyles and positive regard for other people. They are also consulted about their personal care and this is reflected in the records they sign. All children understand their individual health needs and undertake the healthy living initiatives promoted by staff with increasing effectiveness.

Each child has individual responsibilities around the house. This helps them learn important life skills and why they are necessary. They also understand their responsibilities to attend school and to adhere to rules about free time. There are reasonable levels of success in this area, which means that, on the whole, they attend school regularly and make progress towards achieving the same outcomes as their peers.

Education is also pursued through activities outside the home with staff and the children's own families. They consider a variety of activities and success in this area reflects their ages, understanding and the short time they have lived in the home. Their family contact arrangements are addressed as well as possible. These opportunities are also used by children to express their emotions and to learn more about their backgrounds. They are actively involved in the local community, where they learn appropriate social skills.

Quality of care

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

The quality of care is adequate with elements that are good. Children are at the core of staff practices. This starts with planned admissions during which children are gradually introduced in as positive a way as possible. Members of the team interact with children well and in ways that facilitate discussion and progress. They provide good role models across age groups and between genders. Such support is provided consistently in order to meet children's complex needs and high demands. Parents are integrated into care planning wherever possible and social workers are kept informed. There is clear coordination of the care that is provided; this includes, for example, redressing the racist views of some children. Close attention is given to any health issues so that children receive appropriate professional help. The organisation is ready to launch a means of tracking the progress that children make to improve care planning further.

Children are helped to express themselves in a variety of ways and have access to a number of adults outside the home. As a result they know how to raise any concerns. The home is in a densely populated area in which children regularly interact with many other people. To make this as positive as possible, staff and managers meet with neighbours, police and community organisations. This aids mutual understanding and has prevented minor concerns escalating. Neighbours

have made a small number of complaints and these have been addressed effectively. However, this part of the complaints procedure is not described in the Statement of Purpose and the outcomes are not recorded so do not clearly contribute to quality assurance in the home. On the other hand, the location of the home means that children have excellent access to community sporting, recreational and social facilities.

The home itself is well presented internally. Recent improvements have been made to the computer room and improvements are planned to the yard. A proportionate approach is taken to risk assessments and as a result surveillance measures, such as alarms on external doors, are kept to a minimum. However, the written policy for these as reflected in the Statement of Purpose does not address the legal requirement to only use surveillance if specifically necessary. As a result there is a potential risk of such measures being used automatically and thus infringing children's right to privacy.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

There are satisfactory arrangements in place to safeguard and protect children. As a result, children rarely put themselves at significant risk despite the large quantity of minor incidents. It is clear that they feel safe with staff. Staff have a thorough understanding of behaviour management and the acceptable steps they may take to physically intervene. The behaviour of children is reviewed and strategies amended to provide the most effective care possible. In particular, children are engaged in reward schemes to encourage positive routines and behaviours; they also contribute personally to discussions about reparation. There is close and frequent contact with other professionals, including therapists. This means that children benefit from strategies that reflect the combined views of the professionals involved.

There are also adequate systems in place to keep children and staff physically safe. Children and staff undertake fire evacuations regularly so they know how to evacuate the property promptly. However, the records are incomplete and misleading in several areas. For example, they imply that the manager attends all drills when he does not and there is no record of the time that drills occur. Also, the records do not confirm that the written policy, as it applies to the range of feasible scenarios, is implemented by all staff. This means that staff training in this area is less thorough than possible. The home has one vehicle allocated, which is serviced appropriately and is superficially checked by staff. However, the checks do not follow the manufacturer's guidelines. This poses a potential risk of the vehicle becoming unsafe.

Leadership and management

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

The overall leadership of the team is adequate and there are several areas of good practice: children's records, for example, are particularly clear and well presented.

Records clearly show that sufficient attention is given to children's religious or cultural needs, for example, or those arising from any disability. The manager and the assistant manager are responsible for two homes. This allows greater consistency of practice and continuity of care between the two homes. However, the Statement of Purpose is not as descriptive as necessary in some areas. Also, the record of the manager's attendance on site is not shown on the duty roster and is occasionally inaccurately recorded in the daily log. Potentially, this has a negative impact during monitoring exercises or investigations.

A range of measures to monitor standards of care is implemented regularly. They include, however, only a low level of evaluation of the effectiveness of practices. Records do not always show what is needed to improve outcomes for children and, in a small number of cases, such as complaints, the records are not complete. Similarly, the use of children's and other people's views to improve the service is underdeveloped in some areas, such as the appraisal of staff.

Staffing levels are usually sufficient to provide children with the one-to-one support they need. Back-up arrangements, including the link with another home, mean that additional support can be obtained at short notice. Staff members are supported well by senior personnel through formal meetings and also informal conversations. There is a clear and thorough programme of staff training too, which staff hold in high regard. Specific training to meet children's individual needs is provided promptly when it is required.

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.