

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Emeline Evans
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The service is a four-bedded children's home registered for boys with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The home is owned and operated by a private organisation that specialises in the assessment and treatment of male adolescents who have experienced abuse. The organisation also provides educational and therapeutic training.

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**.

Since the last inspection there has been a period of change within the staff team. This has resulted in a number of new staff joining the home and a vacancy in senior position. The organisation has had difficulties in recruiting to this position and therefore additional responsibilities are currently being undertaken by the manager and the staff team. The staff and manager have been working hard to try and achieve consistency for the young people.

Young people are developing positive relationships with the staff and report that they feel safe. Young people have mixed views on the quality of care in the home and the progress they are making. However, the good relationships that they are forming with staff enable young people to discuss issues that may be troubling them. Staff support young people and their management of behaviour effectively. Staff are very aware of the vulnerabilities of the young people and safeguarding is central to all aspects of care planning. They work closely with the therapy team to ensure a holistic approach is achieved. Young people's voices are an essential part of the process.

Shortfalls have been identified and one requirement and a number of recommendations have been made. The majority of the shortfalls relate to deficits in record keeping. The manager is aware of the home's shortfalls and is committed to further improve outcomes for the young people and provide a child centred service.

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)	update the Statement of Purpose to ensure that it includes all the criteria required by regulation (Regulation 4(1), Schedule 1)	31/10/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure all areas of the home are comfortable and homely (NMS 10.3)
- obtain further checks as are considered appropriate for staff, who have lived outside of the United Kingdom, before they start work to establish their suitability to work with children (NMS 16.3(f))
- ensure the review of matters set out in Schedule 6 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001 enables the provider to identify any trends or issues of concern, in order to improve the quality of care provided. This specifically relates to sanctions and their effectiveness (Volume 5, statutory guidance, para 3.14)
- ensure all records are consistently clear and of a high quality, this specifically relates to medication records. (NMS 22)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **adequate**.

Young people are beginning to make progress in this home. This is achieved as young people start to engage and make use of the therapeutic support offered. Young people benefit from the individualised support in place and are developing a clear understanding of themselves and are steadily addressing their behaviours and views. Young people are developing good relationships with staff, which is enabling opportunities for open discussion and learning. As there have been some recent admissions to the home, it is difficult to assess the outcomes for these young people who are just beginning to settle into their new environment.

The staff team encourage healthy eating and support the young people to produce

nutritious and balanced meals. Meal times also provide an opportunity for social interaction. The young people have a sound awareness of the importance of good health and are able to make decisions on how to follow a healthy lifestyle. The home works closely with health professionals where necessary; this assists young people to access additional services should the need arise.

All young people within the home attend either the organisation's school, or a mainstream school. Young people give mixed views about their educational placements; however attendance at these educational establishments is good. Young people make adequate progress educationally from their starting points.

Contact arrangements are supported by staff, and young people benefit from the continuing links with their families. These arrangements are subject to any limitations set out in care plans and are carefully monitored. Parents report on the flexibility of the home in providing and supporting these arrangements for contact.

Within the home, the young people develop a range of life and independence skills that prepare them for moving on and into independence. All young people have daily chores to complete and will take turns to cook an evening meal for the group. This practice is enabling young people's self-esteem and confidence to be further enhanced. Young people report that they enjoy these opportunities.

Quality of care

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

Young people are developing positive relationship with the staff which enables them to address some of their emotional and behavioural issues. Young people's views are mixed about the quality of care. However, culture of openness within the home means that where questions can easily be raised. Young people comment, 'staff are funny they make me laugh' and 'they are ok.'

Meetings take place regularly which give young people the opportunity to express their views in the running of the home. Young people take an active role in decision-making. They understand the house rules and the limitations within the home and community due to their assessed needs. Rules are discussed within house meetings to enable young people to give their views and make requests for changes. Although they do not always like these rules, they generally understand the reason why they are in place. Young people are able to request free time out in the community; this is carefully assessed and linked to good behaviour. Young people are supported to make a complaint and report that that can talk to staff if they have concerns. There have been no complaints since the last inspection.

Young people are cared for in line with their individual placement plans, which identify their individual needs and strategies for meeting these. Young people are supported to contribute to these plans but at times choose not to. However, attendance at their review meetings is good. This practice ensures young people are able to make their views known about their care and are able to reflect on the

progress they are making. As a result, young people feel involved and consulted.

The staff team ensure young people experience social and leisure opportunities within the home and in the wider community. Young people are given the opportunity to attend clubs and visit local attractions and develop links with the local community. Staff work extensively with the young people about their safety in the community and work within clear risk assessment framework and guidelines. All activities involve a high level of supervision and planning.

Staff work closely with the therapy team and education staff to ensure a holistic approach is achieved. Staff encourage and support young people to attend therapy sessions.

Medications are locked in a secure cabinet. The manager has worked with the staff team to strengthen the systems in place. Medication audits have taken place to highlight any discrepancies. There is good evidence that medication is administered safely. However, there are some inconsistencies in the quality of record keeping in this area. These could lead to misunderstandings and confusion.

The home is situated in a residential area within easy reach of local facilities. Young people live in a comfortable relaxed environment which meets their needs. However, the home is showing signs of wear and tear, which distracts from a homely environment.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people have a good understanding of what they need to do to be safe and feel safe. Staff work closely with the therapists to support the young people to achieve this. Safeguarding is a core element in the work of the home. Staff try hard to achieve a safe and accepting atmosphere in the home. Relationships between the young people and staff team are in the process of developing and young people report they are generally confident about approaching staff and having any concerns or worries met.

Measures to ensure the safety of young people in the home and local community are good. Staff are very aware of the vulnerabilities of the young people and are knowledgeable about in-house procedures to follow in the event of a safeguarding concern. Staff undertake regular safeguarding training; this ensures they are kept up to date with current practice. The manager has established links with Local Authority Designated Officer and makes referrals where necessary.

Staff are clear about what to do if a young person should go missing, though this rarely happens. The home has clear protocols with the local police, to ensure there is a prompt response if one of the young people goes missing. Young people benefit from comprehensive risk assessments and high levels of supervision to minimise the risk of this occurring.

Staff communicate clear expectations regarding boundaries; this enables young people to begin to understand the consequences of their behaviour. Restraint is not used in the home; staff and the therapy team work with the young people around anger management. Young people are encouraged to reflect on their behaviours and how it affects others. Sanctions are used and young people are encouraged to sign the records following a sanction being applied. Since the last inspection, there has been an improvement in the recording of sanctions and a better evaluation in the log book of how effective they are.

There is careful selection of staff working with young people in the home. Although, there have not been any staff employed in the home who have lived outside the United Kingdom since the last inspection, the organisation does not routinely undertake further checks to establish their suitability to work with children. Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service checks are undertaken prior to all staff starting work.

Young people's safety is promoted by sound health and safety routines. The home is physically safe and appropriately secure to take into account the individual needs of the young people. Staff ensure that fire drills are regularly undertaken. Effective maintenance systems ensure the home remains safe for young people and visitors.

Leadership and management

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

Young people benefit from a Registered Manager and staff team who are committed to improvements and have high aspirations for the young people they support. The organisation has had difficulties in recruiting to the senior position within the home and therefore additional responsibilities are currently being undertaken by the manager and the staff team. Since the last inspection, a number of staff have left the organisation and the management have worked hard to re-build the staff team and are continuing to identify and redevelop practice and processes. The young people's welfare is enhanced by the emerging relationships that exist between the staff and young people. The Registered Manager is mindful of the strengths and weaknesses of the home and has development plans in place.

The monthly monitoring visits have been reviewed so that there is now more of a focus on evaluation and improvement of the service. Young people are consulted during these visits and are able to give their views. In addition, the manager undertakes regular monitoring of the home. Six monthly reviews are sent into Ofsted. However, it is not clear if sanctions are reviewed during this process. Therefore, trends and patterns are not established in relation to the effectiveness of sanctions.

Staff are familiar with the home's Statement of Purpose and its aims and objectives. This is implemented in day-to-day practice. However, in some cases information required by regulations is not included or lacks clarity. This specifically relates to

details of staff and their qualifications and experience. The young people's guide is informative and explains what a young person can expect from the home.

Staff numbers and support sufficiently meet the needs of the young people. The new team are beginning to work together and although they describe recent times as 'difficult', they are determined to work towards good outcomes for the young people. The management team are trying to recruit to the vacant senior position in the home and are aware of the impact that the shortage may have on being able to meet the individual needs of young people. Regular supervision and team meetings support staff to provide a good quality service to the young people. Staff undertake regular training which provides them with the necessary knowledge and competencies to fulfil their role.

The manager has addressed the three requirements and two recommendations raised at the last Ofsted inspection. Suitable arrangements are now in place to record when medication leaves the house. The effectiveness of consequences is recorded and there is an accurate record of staff rosters worked available. In addition, the manager has recently undergone training in safer recruitment to ensure he is aware of good recruitment practices and there is now more of a formal process for staff to move to senior positions within the home.

Young people's files are stored securely and contain a range of documents, which are relevant and contribute to an understanding of the young person's life. There is some inconsistency in the quality and adequacy of record keeping, this result in some records not being clear and comprehensive. This specifically relates to medication records. Therefore, it is difficult to fully evaluate certain documentation.

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.