

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	05/11/2013
Inspector	Bill Drumm
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

The home accommodates up to five young people who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. It is operated by a private company.

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**.

The home provides very good levels of care and support to young people all of whom are very vulnerable and have complex needs. Good, consistent management, a stable staff team and trusting relationships combine to help keep young people safe from abuse or exploitation. In addition, all young people have made very good progress since their admission. Their self-confidence and self-esteem continue to improve, they are developing an awareness and understanding of how to keep themselves safe and they are continuing to develop socially acceptable behaviour. The atmosphere within the home is very friendly, warm, relaxed and supportive. The young people are polite, talkative and friendly.

Young people are fully supported to attend school and their attendance is excellent. Staff support and encourage them to have aspirations for themselves and to work hard toward achieving them. Young people have access to a wide selection of leisure activities; physical, cultural, sporting or simply recreational. This helps to keep them occupied and provides them with opportunities to acquire confidence and take pleasure in their achievements.

Where appropriate, contact with friends, family and relatives is supported. This helps young people to remain in touch with those who are important to them.

Areas identified for improvement relate to: the home's admissions and discharge register; the visits young people receive from their social workers; the statutory reviews young people have before and immediately after moving into the home and reviewing the home's risk assessments.

Young people living at this home receive consistently good levels of care. The areas identified for improvement have not directly impacted on their safety and welfare.

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
29 (2001)	maintain in the children's home the records specified in Schedule 4 with particular reference to those relating to young people. (Regulation 29 (1), Schedule 4 (1))	31/01/2014

Recommendations

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

- write clear risk assessments of the whole children's home environment to identify any potential sources of harm to the children (NMS 10.8)
- ensure a review takes place before a child is moved to another placement, except in an emergency (NMS 11.6)
- ensure that each young person is visited by their social worker at the frequency expected by regulations (NMS 25.6)
- contact the placing authority to request a statutory review if there has been a significant change in arrangements for the child's care. (NMS 25.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

The young people who live at this home are vulnerable and have complex needs. Staff provide consistent boundaries and individualised care. Through hard work and commitment they are able to improve the lives of the young people they look after. This helps young people to achieve outstanding outcomes. Young people enjoy living in a home where they have developed constructive attachments with staff and are fully supported to participate in, and enjoy, an array of activities that stimulate their minds and help to keep them fit. Examples of such activities include visits to local churches and Cathedrals, bike maintenance, swimming and doing jigsaw puzzles. Young people spoken to were happy and settled at the home and their involvement in a varied programme of activities helps them to develop socially acceptable

behaviour and to grow in confidence.

Where appropriate, young people are able to maintain contact with their families and friends. Staff support contact which helps young people to understand their history and identity. Young people have also developed an understanding of the needs of others in the wider community. Recently they have participated in a charity appeal to send Christmas presents to children in other countries who are less fortunate than themselves. This helps young people to develop empathy for others and to appreciate the world around them.

Staff are versatile and creative in their methods to help young people understand the importance of a healthy diet and taking regular exercise. Examples of this include, pizza making, themed evenings where young people can enjoy food from different countries and walking into town instead of taking a bus. Overall, the health of young people has improved significantly since coming to live at the home and they enjoy excellent health.

Young people are doing very well in education. All attend school on a full-time basis. As well as academic studies they participate in both rural and equine studies. This helps young people to achieve in both practical and academic subjects and all achievements are celebrated. Young people to grow in confidence and develop their self-esteem.

Young people, within the limits of their age and understanding, participate in developing their daily living skills. They take responsibility for looking after their own bedrooms and undertaking more general household tasks such as ironing and baking. This helps young people to be more confident and prepares them for independent living as they get older.

Quality of care

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

The relationships between young people and staff are very good. Young people have confidence that the staff care about them and give their well-being the highest priority. A social worker commented, 'nothing is ever a bother for the staff, they're all excellent.' Young people were observed to be comfortable in the presence of with staff and to talk openly and freely with them.

Staff seek the views of young people as often as possible both formally in house meetings and informally around the dinner table or during activities. This gives young people the opportunity to discuss issues affecting them and to have as much control over their lives as possible.

Care plans draw on the comprehensive information supplied by each young person's placing authority and that gathered at the pre-placement meeting attended by the home's owner and registered manager. Care plans address the breadth of each young person's assessed needs, including those related to their culture and identity.

Important information from the care plans has also been summarised for young people into an easy to understand format, using plain English and graphics. This aids their understanding and helps them to know what their placement at the home is meant to achieve. However, one young person recently admitted to the home, from another in the same organisation, did not have their care reviewed prior to, or immediately following the move taking place. In addition, the young person's social worker has not visited at the required intervals to ensure their care remains appropriate and they are happy. This means that the wishes and feelings of the young person about the move have not been gathered and they may not feel fully listened to.

All young people, irrespective of their age, receive help to acquire life skills. They are encouraged to keep their bedrooms neat and tidy, to do their own laundry and ironing and to participate in meal preparation and baking. This helps young people to understand the demands of independent living and to acquire the necessary daily living skills to make a successful transition into adulthood.

The home is excellent at promoting young people's health. There is a strong emphasis on healthy eating and taking regular exercise. Staff are always successful in encouraging young people to engage in annual health assessments as well as routine health appointments. The home has developed important and constructive relationships with other services, such as the looked after nurse for children. This ensures that staff, get the advice and support they need to care for young people with complex needs such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The home also has good links with the child and adolescent mental health service, providing support to young people when necessary. In addition, staff are skilled in talking through distressing issues with young people and giving them reassurance and comfort.

All young people attend school on a full-time basis. They are given the opportunity to study both academic and practical subjects like animal husbandry, rural studies and equine studies. Staff, actively support young people to complete their homework and to aspire to achieve more. Young people develop confidence and learn to celebrate their achievements.

The home is very comfortable and welcoming. The home's owner ensures a swift response to any maintenance or repairs that may become necessary. This underlines the priority given to keeping the home looking good and conveys to young people that they should look after their home and that they deserve to live in a pleasant environment.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Staff are fully aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and they take prompt action to ensure the safety and welfare of young people. All staff has received training on safeguarding issues and this training is kept up to date and relevant. As a

consequence, young people feel safe and are kept safe.

Staff are fully committed to ensuring the welfare of all the young people in their care and are vigilant to any circumstances that may develop into intimidation or bullying. Young people are fully engaged in a wide range of stimulating and challenging activities both in the home and in the community. Constructive use of young people's leisure time helps to prevent boredom and arguments occurring. As a result bullying and intimidation does not take place.

Most young people have a detailed and comprehensive risk assessment in place. Staff regularly review risk assessments to ensure they remain accurate and up to date. However, one young person who recently moved into the home, from another in the same organisation, has not had their risk assessment fully reviewed since being admitted. This means that their safety could be compromised. Generally, young people are kept exceptionally safe while enabling them to experience the full range of exciting and rewarding activities on offer.

Each young person has their own behaviour management plan in place. Behaviour management plans are both detailed and comprehensive and help young people develop socially acceptable behaviour, to progress toward adulthood and to keep them safe. This system is very effective and enables staff to know where young people are at all times. Young people are able to progress in an organised and structured manner, they do not go missing, and they are kept safe.

Young people were observed to be very friendly, polite and well mannered. Their behaviour within the home is generally very good. The use of holding or restraint to assist a young person moderate their behaviour is seldom used. When it is used it is for the minimum amount of time necessary and the details of all incidents are fully recorded. A member of staff said, 'we try not to use restraint but sometimes, when all else fails, it is necessary. We try to divert them away from misbehaving or damaging anything first. We also try and teach them to have a pride in their surroundings and to respect their home. It seems to work most of the time.' Another staff member said, 'we try to reward all positive behaviour no matter how small. Young people are always being praised for doing well and they often get a pat on the back.' Young people are treated with dignity and respect at all times and are able to develop appropriate behaviour.

The home has clear and detailed recruitment and selection systems in place. All staff are thoroughly vetted prior to taking up their positions at the home. The safety of young people is safeguarded and they are protected from exploitation or abuse.

Leadership and management

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

The management and staff are clear about their roles within the home and all are passionate in supporting young people to achieve their full potential. Strong leadership and a competent, enthusiastic staff team promote the achievement and

development of all young people who are provided with the best possible care. A placing social worker said, 'I'm always impressed with the care given to my young person. The staff are fantastic.' The home meets the aims and objectives set out in its Statement of Purpose which fully complies with national minimum standards and regulations. Placing authorities know precisely what the home sets out to do and how young people placed there will be looked after.

The home is very well staffed, not only in terms of numbers of staff on duty at any one time but also in their qualifications and experience. The ability and knowledge of staff contributes significantly to the excellent nurturing that the home provides. The home's manager ensures that staff, receive consistent supervision and that team meetings take place at regular intervals. One staff member said, 'I'm proud to work here. I think we do an excellent job and we all really do care about the young people. We want what's best for them.' Consistent supervision and regular team meetings give staff the support they need to respond professionally and caringly to young people even in the face of significant challenges.

At the last interim inspection in January 2013 the home was judged to be making good progress. No statutory requirements or recommendations were made at that inspection. In addition, the manager has a development plan for the home in place. The manager and staff know what the strengths and weaknesses of the home are and what improvements they wish to make.

The organisation demonstrates a commitment to training all staff by ensuring their training is kept up to date. This helps to ensure staff members retain the skills and competencies they have and encourages them to develop new ones.

The home retains clear and concise written records about each young person's life at the home. However, the home's admissions and discharge register does not always record the full address from where a young person has been admitted, the details of their placing authority or the legal basis under which they are being looked after. This home's admissions and discharge register does not therefore fully comply with regulations.

There are formal systems in place to ensure that the quality of care is regularly monitored. Problem areas which may be identified are quickly highlighted and swift action is taken. Monitoring visits from someone independent of the home take place every month. The person undertaking these visits talks, where possible, to staff and young people. In addition, and where appropriate, the visiting officer talks with the parents or relatives of young people themselves. Independent visits to the home help to ensure that the home is run properly and that young people are well cared for.

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.