

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Bill Drumm
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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* (March 2011) and the evaluation schedule for children's homes.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service that exceeds minimum requirements

Satisfactory: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Service information

Brief description of the service

The children's home is run by a private company which provides residential care and education for young people. It is registered to care for up to four young people aged between 8 and 17 years old and whose main need for being looked after is because of emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **good**.

Since joining the home young people have made good progress and benefitted from a committed and enthusiastic staff team who have a good knowledge base and sound values. Formal education is fully supported and actively promoted. Young people are encouraged to become involved in a full range of community based activities, which in turn, helps to develop their self confidence and social skills. Young people feel listened to and feel they can talk about any problems or concerns they may have. Young people and members of staff have a good positive relationship, which is based on mutual respect. Young people are both polite and confident. The home is pleasant and welcoming and meets the needs of the young people. Feedback for this inspection from staff members, and other professionals is extremely positive.

Each young person has a comprehensive, individualised care plan and risk assessment in place. The care plans are regularly reviewed and members of staff take time to clearly explain the content of care plans to young people. However, some young people choose not to fully participate in this process. Some young people may not therefore, fully understand what it is that the home is trying to achieve for them, and how they can work toward meeting their own needs. The home and the organisation have separate development plans in place. The organisation, the home's manager and members of staff have a clear picture of what the home's strengths and weaknesses are and what they wish to achieve over the coming months.

Members of staff have all received training to help them do their jobs better. Some training has not been kept up to date. Members of staff have not retained all the skills necessary to look after young people. The home's Statement of Purpose accurately reflects what the home wishes to achieve. However, the document does not clearly describe the individual experience of staff members.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure that staff training is kept up to date (NMS 18.1)
- ensure that young people understand the purpose and content of their placement plan (NMS 25.1)
- review the home's Statement of Purpose to ensure it fully complies with national minimum standards (NMS 13.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for children and young people are **good**.

Young people living at the home are encouraged to learn new things and to experience new activities. Recent activities undertaken with young people include trips to the countryside, working on a farm and attending the St John's ambulance brigade. One young person said, 'I enjoy the farm, particularly the horse riding.' This helps young people to grow more confident and to develop self esteem. Each young person has their own key worker. The key worker system is well organised and helps young people feel listened to, and to make their needs known. One young person commented, 'staff listen to me, I can talk with all of them and I like them all.' All young people are included in the home's social group and activities, this helps to avoid exclusion and feelings of isolation. Young people are confident, friendly and welcoming to visitors.

Young people receive consistent levels of support to learn new things and to develop their self-confidence and independence. Young people are encouraged, to take part in meal preparation and to prepare snacks. This helps to develop their independence and to prepare them more fully for adult life. A social worker said, 'they've provided my young person with a great deal of stability and they have a bright future. It's great when you think about their background and where they've come from.' Young people have individual health care plans in place which outline what their health care needs are and how they will be met. Members of staff are fully aware of each young person's health needs and ensure they are met. This helps young people to stay fit and healthy.

The education of young people is given very high priority. Attendance at school is actively encouraged and supported. One young person said, 'I go to school every day, I'm doing early entry exams. I want to join the police when I'm older or perhaps the cavalry.' A social worker said, 'they've made sterling efforts to get my young person into school and to keep attending. Now they're trying to teach them to be more independent. I couldn't have asked for any more.' Encouraging young people to attend school and to achieve their targets will help to ensure they have the best possible life chances as they move into adulthood. Young people's files contain all the necessary educational information, including statements of special educational needs and personal education plans. This helps members of staff to understand the educational needs of the young people better and to promote their continued improvement.

Young people are supported and enabled to remain in contact with their families and friends. This helps young people to maintain relationships with those who are important to them and to maintain a sense of identity.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy positive relationships with staff members which are based on mutual respect and understanding. The home provides a very warm comfortable and supportive environment in which young people can develop both physically and emotionally. The care planning system used within the home is comprehensive and members of staff try to fully involve young people in this process. Detailed records are maintained and any changes in need are quickly identified and acted upon. Regular monitoring of care plans enable staff to evaluate the care they provide and to identify any changes which may be necessary. However, some young people do not pay full attention, and do not know what their exact goals are and how they can be achieved. One staff member said, 'I know he doesn't read it. I go through it with him and explain it all clearly to him. He signs it but he doesn't really want to know.' Young people are involved in their care and members of staff help them to understand what it is the home is trying to achieve for them.

Members of staff are aware of each young person's strengths and they provide a very supportive environment in which they can develop their independence and learn new tasks. Members of staff display an enthusiastic and committed approach to caring for young people. They offer advice and support on how to stay fit and well, quickly attending to young people who are ill or suffer accidents. Members of staff encourage young people to lead an active lifestyle and to take regular exercise. One young person spoken to said, 'I like all the activities we do, there's loads of different things.' There are written records in place to show what each young person eats each week. These records show that the diet of all the young people is varied and provides a good balance of fresh fruit and vegetables. Young people enjoy a well balanced diet, which helps to keep them healthy. Written records are maintained of all medication administered to young people are accurate and clearly written. There is a good approach within the home to promoting the health and well-being of young people.

The home has a thorough and detailed admissions process for young people. Members of staff work hard to ensure each young person enjoys a positive experience while living at the home and is able to develop socially, physically and emotionally. Thorough and detailed assessments are undertaken prior to admission and this helps to support this process.

The home has a detailed complaints process and young people are encouraged to voice their concerns. Members of staff spoken to said, they listen to what young people have to say and that they try to resolve any issues they might have promptly. One young person said, 'whenever I've not been happy about something I've said so and I get listened to. I know if I'm not happy I can take it further.' Young people are fully able to make their needs known and to raise formal complaints if they are unhappy about anything. This helps them to feel cared for and content.

Young people enjoy living in a residential area and are able to participate in a range of purposeful and enjoyable activities, which includes shopping trips, visits to local leisure centres and attending local clubs and societies. Each young person has their own bedroom and they are encouraged to make them as comfortable and personal as possible. There is a television in the lounge where young people can relax. One

young person said, 'it's lovely here, I enjoy it and I'm very happy. There's things to do outside but and if I want to stay in and watch TV I can do that as well.' The home also has a dining area where members of staff and young people can socialise, enjoy a meal together and talk informally. This helps young people to develop their social skills.

Relationships between members of staff and young people are warm and friendly. Members of staff strive to provide an environment in which young people can be happy and flourish. One young person spoken to said, 'I know staff care about me and want what's best for me. I like them all really.' A visiting social worker said, 'you can tell that the staff care about the young people, they go to extraordinary lengths to help them settle in and to remain here.' Young people feel comfortable at the home and understand that members of staff are there to help them.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

There are clear systems in place within the home to safeguard young people. When asked, one young person said, 'I feel safe here and there's no bullying going on.' Risk assessments have been carried out in the home and these have been regularly monitored and up dated in line with changing circumstances or behaviours of young people. Young people are fully protected and kept safe from harm. A social worker said, 'my young person's been putting themselves at risk but the staff here go to extraordinary lengths to keep them safe.' There have been a small number of occasions when a young person has been missing from the home. Members of staff respond appropriately to a young person on their return and written records show that the occasions of being missing have reduced significantly. The manager and all members of staff are fully trained in safeguarding. They receive regular refresher training to keep their skills and knowledge up to date. This helps to keep young people safe and protected from potential abuse.

Members of staff promote a culture of positive behaviour within the home. Young people are supported to take responsibility for their actions; sanctions and restraint are used rarely. One young person said, 'there are rules here and I think they're fair. Sometimes there are sanctions but these are not used very often.' Members of staff prefer to use their skills to encourage young people through reward systems, by listening to them and by diverting their attention to more appropriate behaviour. This helps young people to develop more appropriate ways to deal with any stress, anxiety or difficulties they may be facing.

The home's manager ensures that all safety checks needed within the home are undertaken to ensure the safety of young people and members of staff. The manager also ensures that appropriate and regular checks of the home's fire systems, smoke detectors and emergency lighting are carried out.. Young people understand the fire evacuation process and practice fire drills including those at night. Full written records are maintained by the home's manager. Risk assessments are available with regard to the general building and also in relation to the young people themselves. Risk assessments are clear and regularly reviewed. Young people live in a safe environment and their safety is fully protected.

Young people benefit from a stable staff team. There have been no new appointments since the last inspection. The home's recruitment process is thorough and helps to ensure that only those who are suitable to work with young people are employed. Visitors to the home are asked to identify themselves on arrival and to sign the visitor's book. Young people are protected by the home's recruitment procedures and are kept safe from having unsuitable staff working within the home. abuse.

Leadership and management

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

The home meets the aims and objectives set out in its Statement of Purpose. The Statement of Purpose clearly describes the skills and qualifications members of staff have in looking after young people. However, their experience of looking after or working with young people outside of the home is not described. Members of staff have areas of interest like sport or the arts, which could be utilised to help young people achieve even higher goals. The young people's guide to the home is clearly written and provides important information, which young people may need. Young people know what they can expect from living at the home and who they can speak to if they are worried about anything.

Young people's files are detailed and well ordered. Written information retained within the home provides a record of each young person's life there as well as the help and support carried out by staff members. House meetings involving the young people take place at regular intervals and their opinions are listened to. Young people and staff members discuss activities that the young people may wish to try as well as different meals they might like to sample. This helps young people to develop their confidence, self-esteem and to experience full range of life experiences. Monitoring visits from someone independent of the home take place every month. The person undertaking these visits makes a real attempt to engage young people in conversation and to seek their opinions regard to how the home is run. Young people contribute to improving the quality of their care.

The organisation demonstrates a clear commitment to training. All members of staff have achieved a relevant National Vocational Qualifications to a minimum of level 3. In addition, members of staff also receive training in a number of areas which help to safeguard and protect the welfare of children. Written records indicate that training in the home's complaints procedures has not been undertaken. However, staff members spoken to were all able to demonstrate a sound understanding of the home's complaints process. The welfare of young people is therefore safeguarded and any complaints handled appropriately. The home's manager ensures that all members of staff receive formal supervision on a regular basis. One member of staff said, 'we get regular supervision but we're also able to ask the manager things whenever we like, his door's always open. The staff team here are great as well, we all support each other, it's a great place to work.' In addition regular staff meetings are also held. This helps staff members to feel supported in their work.

The home's manager provides effective management and has systems in place to ensure that the quality of care is regularly monitored. Any problem areas which may be identified are attended to and appropriate action taken. The organisation and the home have development plans in place. The home's owners, the manager and members of staff are fully aware of the home's strengths and weaknesses.

Staff members are both enthusiastic and motivated and are encouraged to create new opportunities for the young people living at the home. One young person spoken to said, 'the manager and staff are great, they try and help me do new things and they're always cheerful.'

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.