

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Rachel Ruth Britten
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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 home is part of a small private organisation providing placements to girls and boys between nine and 17 years of age who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home is located in an isolated rural area, a car drive from the nearest town. Living accommodation and education are provided across three adapted farm buildings and there are no immediate neighbours.

Programmes are designed to meet individual needs, provide independence training and educational opportunities, and to avoid exclusion.

Overall effectiveness

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

The home is not presently providing an adequate quality of care. Personalised, well planned care which takes full account of the individual needs of each young person is not being consistently provided. The views of some young people about the quality of care in the home are quite negative and their behaviour is deteriorating in some instances. Young people do say that they feel safe here but there are some care practices and procedures which significantly compromise the quality of safeguarding.

The quality of relationships between staff and young people are weak in some instances and this adversely affects the quality of work being done with young people. Nevertheless, the outcomes for young people are satisfactory overall. Recent changes in the management of the setting have taken place and there is sufficient capacity and motivation to identify and address current inadequacies, including the significant number of regulatory shortfalls identified in the inspection.

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
38 (2001)	ensure that notice is given in writing to HMCI as soon as is practicable of any proposed change of manager (Regulation 38 (e)(ii))	14/07/2011
33	ensure that copies of the reports of Regulation 33 visits are	14/07/2011

(2001)	supplied to HMCI (Ofsted) and that young people and persons working in the home are interviewed, with their consent and in private, in order to form an opinion of the standard of care provided in the home (Regulation 33 (5)(a) and 4(a))	
31 (2001)	ensure that the premises are kept clean, reasonably decorated and maintained (Regulation 31 (2)(e))	14/07/2011
29 (2001)	ensure that the home's register is kept up to date, showing all the details required by Schedule 4, in particular young people's addresses on leaving the home (Regulation 29(1))	14/07/2011
28 (2001)	ensure that young people's case records contain all the information required in Schedule 3 and are kept up to date (Regulation 28(1))	14/07/2011
27 (2001)	ensure that all persons employed receive appropriate training, supervision and appraisal and are enabled to obtain further qualifications appropriate to the work they perform (Regulation 27 (4)(a) and (b))	14/07/2011
24 (2001)	ensure that complaints records show all the actions taken in response and the outcomes (Regulation 24 (5))	14/07/2011
21 (2001)	make suitable arrangements for the recording, safekeeping, and disposal of any medicines received into the children's home (Regulation 21 (1))	14/07/2011
20 (2001)	promote and protect the physical, emotional and mental health of the young people accommodated in the home, with particular reference to the provision of guidance, support and advice on health issues appropriate to young people's needs (Regulation 20)	14/07/2011
16 (2001)	ensure that the policy for safeguarding young people from abuse and neglect makes clear that child protection enquiries are to be referred to, and carried out by, a local authority in the exercise of its functions under the 1989 Act relating to the protection of children (Regulation 16 (3))	14/07/2011
15 (2001)	ensure that young people accommodated in the home are provided at all reasonable times and without reference to persons working in the home, access to a telephone on which to make and receive telephone call in private (Regulation 15 (4))	14/07/2011
5 (2001)	keep the Statement of Purpose and children's guide under review and revise where appropriate, notifying HMCI of any such revision within 28 days and supplying a revised copy of the children's guide to each child accommodated in the home (Regulation 5)	14/07/2011
4 (2001)	ensure that the Statement of Purpose correctly states all the matters listed in Schedule 1. (Regulation 4 (1) Schedule 1.5, 1.14, 1.15, 1.18, 1.19, 1.20, 1.22)	14/07/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure that young people receive personalised care that promotes all aspects of their individual identity and are treated as an individual rather than a member of a group (NMS 2.1)
- ensure that all staff have high expectations of all young people, support positive behaviour, and are helped to manage their responses and feelings arising from the behaviours presented by young people (NMS 3.1, 3.2 and 3.9)
- use care plans and risk assessments more effectively to clearly set out the emotional and behavioural needs of young people and how they are to be addressed (NMS 3.7)
- ensure that searches of a young person, their room or their possessions are consistently carried out in accordance with the home's guidance and that young people are aware of this guidance (NMS 3.20)
- ensure that staff are trained and competent in safe-care practice and are able to promote young people's welfare consistently in the home, generating a culture of openness and trust. Ensure that staff are aware of and alert to any signs or symptoms that might indicate that a child is at risk of harm (NMS 4.2, 4.3 and 4.6)
- ensure that staff adopt safe care practices in respect of visitors, specifically checking the identification of visitors and adequately chaperoning any unchecked visitors (NMS 4.8)
- ensure that staff promote health and assist young people to maintain a healthy lifestyle and make informed choices about their own health, including with respect to healthy eating, smoking and substance misuse (NMS 6.2 and 6.7)
- ensure that all staff and young people are familiar with the emergency escape plan and have practised it so that they know what to do (NMS 10.9)
- include in the young people's guide, a summary of how a young person can contact their Independent Reviewing Officer, the Children's Rights Director, and Ofsted if they wish to raise a concern (NMS 13.5)
- provide and make use of a written development plan for the home, identifying any planned changes to the operation of the home and its resourcing (15.2)
- ensure that the number, deployment and competence of staff can meet the individual needs of all young people resident in the home. Ensure that no member of staff from an external agency is alone on duty at night in the home (NMS 17.1 and 17.8)
- ensure that all existing care staff have attained a minimum level 3 qualification and that all staff engaged from the commencement of the new national minimum

standards hold the level 3 Children and Young People's Workforce Diploma or are working towards it within six months of confirmation of employment (NMS 18.5)

- ensure that staff receive good support and advice to provide a high quality service to young people (NMS 19)
- ensure that information about young people is recorded clearly and in a way which is helpful to them when they access their files now or in the future. Actively encourage young people to read their files and add personal statements (NMS 22.5)
- support and encourage young people to reflect on and understand their history and to keep appropriate memorabilia and records of their time in placement (NMS 22.6)
- ensure that appropriate action is taken following all notifiable incidents and that records are robust, showing all incidents, the action taken and the outcome of any action or investigation. (NMS 24)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are making adequate progress overall, based upon their starting points. Many of them have experienced numerous previous moves and are now in a home where they are able to stay for a longer period and experience some stability. Their confidence, emotional resilience and understanding of their background have the opportunity to grow in this context. Young people's emotional health is satisfactory and a few of them are accessing individual support from youth offending and psychological services. However, young people's physical health is not visibly improving. Many young people are smoking and misusing substances. They are not in a routine of preparing and eating regular and nutritious meals. Few of them are taking regular exercise either.

Most young people are undertaking site based education and life skills training. A few young people are beginning to access mainstream school and are aiming to take up college courses. This represents significant progress for some. There are two separate buildings which comprise the home, enabling young people who are working towards independent adult life to live in a unit geared up for this. Young people's engagement with education and independence training is adequate overall. It is good on occasions with respect to laundry, personal hygiene, budgeting and cooking, but is variable between young people and from day-to-day.

Young people have some links with the local communities through shopping, visiting the library, and free time in local towns. However, the home is very isolated and there is no access to towns without being taken to them by staff. Some young people are getting involved in criminal behaviour or going missing when on free time in local towns. This holds back their progress towards community integration and citizenship. Young people are benefitting from appropriate contact with family and friends who are important to them. The home prioritises this aspect of their work and support young people well to safely enjoy contact and manage the feelings evoked around it.

Quality of care

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

Relationships between staff and young people are not positive or constructive enough. Staff expectations of young people are too low in some instances and staff are insufficiently trained and supported to promote positive behaviour. Staff and young people are often unclear about what is happening and routines are subject to frequent change, partly because there is an over-reliance on agency staff. As a result, many young people are not behaving well and do not feel that they are being treated as an individual.

Young people say that they do not feel their views, wishes and feelings are actively sought. Young people's meetings and individual key work sessions are irregular and are not effective at present. Young people are receiving little high quality individual guidance and support, using clear plans and objectives. Young people are not being given time, opportunity and support to reflect on and understand their history or to gather memorabilia and records of their experiences in this placement. There is little reference to young people's files by staff or young people because planning documents, such as care plans and risk assessments, are not user-friendly. Documents do not always contain up-to-date information or planning tools which tell staff and young people clearly what they are aiming to achieve and how. Staff are defensive rather than proactive about involving young people in reading their records and adding their personal comments. Young people are receiving too little guidance about why it is not possible to act on their wishes in all cases. As a result, some young people are able to establish contacts with adults who may be unsuitable and are constructing unrealistic scenarios for their future care and adult life.

Young people have little confidence that their specific complaints to managers are addressed. Complaints, incident and notification records do not show sufficient detail about the actions taken and their outcomes. This results in a lack of confidence that matters are dealt with robustly and in young people's best interests. The young people's guide does not contain all the required information about the people and organisations that they can complain or talk to outside of the home. The telephone in one of the units is broken and young people do not have access to a telephone on site without recourse to adults. Young people are subject to many staff changes and are not sure who is looking after them at times. Young people are making poor choices about their behaviour, eating habits and daily routines because the individual plans for their care, behaviour and progress are unclear. This means that staff and young people have little incentive to engage and work towards clear goals in clearly defined and appropriately rewarded ways.

Staff are proactive to organise and support education. Within this, there are purposeful and educational trips, for example, to museums. Staff liaise with schools and endeavour to provide support to young people to undertake and complete suitable educational challenges on site. The home no longer offer overnight or longer trips away from the site because they are seeking to provide a more homely weekly routine and lifestyle. Some staff who specialise in outward bound pursuits are less positive about the changes in approach. They are unconfident about working with young people one-to-one and in a more parental style. Staff try to engage young people in normal daily routines, such as keeping their rooms and clothes clean and tidy. They provide incentive monies for these things and offer to work alongside

young people in meal preparation. Staff offer to play board games or watch films with young people. However, young people are often not inspired to engage fully and their differing individual needs are not sufficiently understood or catered for by all staff.

The home consists of two home bases, a few yards apart, with additional separate educational and office units. Its remoteness reduces the opportunities for young people to run away and means that young people are very reliant on the home and staff to meet all their needs. Staffing is arranged so that staff may work with young people in either the independence house or the main house. At times it is difficult for staff and young people to know where one another are. The office is being relocated back into the main home base, but there are still practical problems in coordinating staff and managing recording and communications across a number of buildings, especially when mobile phone signals are very poor. Medicines are stored safely in the office and recording and administration of medicines is generally robust. However, some staff carry their own medicines on their person and medicinal items stored which belong to staff are not robustly recorded.

The home has a rustic, rural feel and some young people appreciate the space and the solid feel to the houses and surroundings. Furniture is suitable and mostly in adequate repair, including good music players and televisions in young people's rooms. There are plans to decorate and improve young people's bedrooms with more robust furniture and a more personalised environment. At present, there is very little evidence in communal areas of who lives here. There are things which are individual or special to the young people in residence. Young people are not proud of their home or their rooms at present. They are not very engaged in taking care of their rooms or their home generally as a result. Wear and tear and damage is not repaired promptly enough and the cleaning and maintenance of bathrooms and floors is poor.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people mostly say they feel safe here. There are sufficient numbers of staff and they work to ensure that young people are protected from significant harm, including accident and exploitation. There are good procedures in place for the vetting of staff and checking of agency staff. Visitors are asked to sign in and out at the office, but are not always asked for proof of identity. Emergency evacuations are still not practised often enough for all staff and young people to be confident about them. Risky behaviour, such as smoking in the house and barricading rooms, has recently taken place. Nevertheless, there are adequate risk assessments used to manage situations when staff are alone for extended periods with young people. There are also clear handovers and discussions between staff about young people's behaviours and how to manage them. However, young people's behaviour is observed at times to be volatile, including verbal abuse and attempts to hurt staff, themselves, other young people and property. Young people are bringing illegal substances, phones and stolen items onto the premises on occasions. The guidance about searches and the recording of them is not clear to staff and young people in every instance. Some staff feel low in morale and vulnerable with young people and are sometimes at a loss to effectively de-escalate situations.

Instances of young people going missing and incidents in the home have recently increased, leading to renewed concerns about the appropriateness of the placement for some young people and the mix of residents. Staff actively look for young people when they are missing and work satisfactorily with the local police and youth offending services to help support young people's safety when they are missing and when they return. Staff communicate promptly with placing authorities when there are incidents and they provide them with clear information about safeguarding concerns where these occur. However, staff are not all confident about safe care practice, child protection procedures and restraint. There have also been whistle-blowing reports concerning the conduct of agency staff on shift. On occasions, there is insufficient detail recorded about allegations, incidents and complaints, particularly the outcomes, the lessons learnt and the feedback to notifiable agencies. In addition, the home's policy on child protection does not make it clear enough that all child protection allegations and investigations are to be undertaken in the first instance by the local safeguarding children officers who may then delegate issues back to the home for follow up.

Leadership and management

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

There has been a new manager in post for a number of months, but notification of this has not been received by Ofsted and the process of establishing suitability through the regulator has therefore not yet taken place. Nevertheless, the leaders and managers of the setting have action plans for the home including changes to the ethos, staffing, activities and daily routines. They aim to provide a settled, homely environment, with a more family feel. At the time of inspection, planned changes have not taken effect and the transition phase is producing tensions which are adversely affecting the quality of care and safeguarding. Nevertheless leaders and managers are aware of the magnitude of the task and are committed to effective change and improvement.

There is no written development plan being used by the home to show the home's vision, based upon the monthly monitoring and action planning that it does. In addition, the home's Statement of Purpose and the children's guide do not accurately reflect the home's present ethos and running. Revisions are not routinely notified to HMCI, placing authorities and young people. This is required to ensure that interested parties understand the home's current aims and objectives for young people's care. In addition, the Statement of Purpose gives little or no information about some of the matters listed in Schedule 1 of the Regulation. This means that interested parties have too little information about staffing, activities, behaviour management, going missing, electronic surveillance, emergency procedures and contact.

At the time of inspection, requirements and recommendations from the last inspection are either partially met or not met. The requirement to ensure that the home is visited for Regulation 33 visits by someone not directly concerned with the home is met, but copies of these reports are not being supplied to HMCI and there is too little evidence that young people and staff are being properly consulted during these visits. Good work is underway to meet the requirements for the vetting of staff and provide evidence of this is on the premises. However, there are still significant shortfalls in the training, support and appraisal of staff. This, and the reliance on agency staff, is having a significant negative impact on the home. Managers are aware of this, but have not yet rectified it.

There are too few qualified and experienced staff, including at shift leader level. As a result, there is a lack of insight by the staff group into the individual needs of young people and how to provide for them consistently and effectively. There is also too little effective support being given to staff to help them understand and manage their own feelings arising from the work. As a result, morale is low. However, there are training programmes in place for the provision of both professional diploma training and in-house specific courses to update and refresh key areas where staff need training and support. Managers are confident that training will take place and that it will address many identified areas of difficulty.

Equality and diversity practice is **inadequate**.

