

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Nicholas Murphy
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home accommodates up to three young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. It is provided by a private organisation.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service 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 is warm and welcoming and staff relate to young people in a way which makes them feel cared for and wanted. The home takes account of the needs of each young person and draws up detailed plans to meet them. Staff are skilled in working to these plans with the aim of developing and nurturing young people to make progress in their lives. Staff are able to understand the underlying causes of young people's behaviour and support young people in developing emotional resilience.

Young people can enjoy a very wide range of activities which develop mind and body. This helps them to increase in confidence and gain a variety of skills. A social worker commented 'My young person really enjoys everything that is offered and is stimulated to a high standard.' Young people know that their views are respected and acted upon by the home. They feel confident about how to complain or who to talk to if they have any concerns or worries. Young people's views of the home were summed up by one who said, when asked to rate it out of 10, 'I'd give it 1,000.'

The atmosphere within the home is family-like. Generally, young people have warm and mutually respectful relationships with each other and with staff. One young person said 'Staff are brilliant.' Staff are constantly watchful and are able to nip in the bud any issues such as teasing or verbal abuse which may lead to bullying. Through daily interactions, staff help young people to develop self-control and a greater sense of responsibility for their behaviour.

The supervision which the staff are able to provide ensures that young people always feel safe. There are good assessments of risk of all young people which are reviewed and updated as circumstances change and the young people mature.

Although generally sound, there are some shortfalls in management of the home. Some records are not kept in sufficient detail and both internal and external monitoring fails to address all requirements. In addition, some young people who are shortly moving out of the home as adults do not have pathway plans.

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)	ensure that the Children's Guide includes a summary of the home's Statement of Purpose (Regulation 4(3)(a))	27/07/2012
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of restraint in a children's home, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose, specifically that the nature of the restraint is described in plain language and the duration of the restraint is also recorded (Regulation 17B(3)(c))	29/06/2012
28 (2001)	maintain a record of the date and circumstances of all incidents where a child accommodated in the home goes missing from the home, specifically that the information recorded is complete and accurate (Regulation 28 (1)(a))	29/06/2012
33 (2001)	ensure that, as appears necessary, the person conducting the visits under this regulation, interviews with their consent and in private, the children's parents and relatives in order to form an opinion of the standard of care provided in the home (Regulation 33(4)(a))	27/07/2012
34 (2001)	establish and maintain a system for improving the quality of care provided in the children's home, specifically to provide for consultation with children accommodated in the home, their parents and placing authorities, and to record accurately details relating to accidents in the home. (Regulation 34(3) and Schedule 6)	27/07/2012

Recommendations

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

- contribute to the development of each child's pathway plan for eligible care leavers and work collaboratively with the young person's social worker in implementing the plan. (NMS 12.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people have made good progress in developing greater maturity. They generally feel good about themselves and are beginning to have more insight into their feelings and behaviour. They have formed good attachments with staff and regard them with obvious affection. Young people look forward to seeing staff and sharing with them their latest news about what is going on in their lives. One social worker wrote of her young person 'They view the staff as extended family.' This gives them a secure emotional footing and a sound base for further growth and development.

Young people are happy and in good health. They eat well and take advantage of the wide range of activities on offer both within and outside the home. In addition to the emotional support they receive from staff, young people can access specialist psychological services if necessary. One social worker confirmed that, in the case of their young person, 'All their health needs are fully addressed.' Young people have exceptionally good attendance at school and college. They are progressing well in their work and take pride in their achievements.

Young people show enthusiasm for household tasks and take their turn in keeping the home tidy and helping with chores. They also have an appreciation of the needs of others in wider society, for example by making items for a craft fair to support orphanages in Africa. Young people are able to have contact with family in line with their wishes and their care plan, which strengthens their identity with their family and cultural background. Some young people have also developed friendships in the community which the staff are keen to support.

Practice within the home follows the principle that young people are never too young to acquire skills they will need in adulthood. Consequently, staff assess all young people's ability in this area and encourage them to do as many things as possible for themselves. Achievements are marked with formal certificates which record the step-by-step progress a young person has made in reaching a developmental goal. Goals include such everyday tasks as using a hairdryer properly and safely. However, formal pathway plans for some young people who require them are not in place. This makes it harder to plan transition out of the home and thus creates uncertainty for young people about their future.

Quality of care

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

Staff provide ample opportunities for young people to express their feelings and to share any issues that might be of concern to them. Young people feel comfortable in airing their views and preferences freely, and this ensures that they have a good say in what goes on in the home.

The home has detailed placement plans for young people which are reviewed and, if necessary, updated at regular intervals. These plans address all areas of need and ensure that the staff know the specific actions to take to help young people make progress. Staff use regular key worker sessions to talk to young people about their lives and how they can be helped to develop. One social worker wrote 'My young person is well consulted and knows what the plan is for them.' Staff have worked creatively with placing social workers and other professionals to ensure that all young people's cultural needs are addressed. For example, one young person has had an independent visitor who shares the same cultural heritage. This has enabled the young person to maintain their cultural, linguistic and religious identity.

Every aspect of life in the home promotes and supports healthy lifestyles for young people. Staff provide a varied and nutritious diet and make sure that young people eat healthily. Young people help with the cultivation of fresh fruit and vegetables in the home's garden. The achievement and maintenance of good personal hygiene is a prominent part of care planning. Many of the activities provided by the home improve young people's fitness, coordination and general well-being. In addition, the home makes sure that basic health needs are met by providing access to opticians and dentists and teaching young people the importance of staying healthy. The home also makes use of specialist services, such as speech and language therapy, to improve the quality of young people's lives.

Some young people attend the provider's own school while others go to mainstream school or college. Whatever provision young people attend, staff are effective in promoting good attendance and achievement. They work closely with providers to ensure good two-way communication and support for extra-curricular activities. As a result, all young people are making good progress in their studies and taking advantage of the whole range of opportunities offered in school or college.

The provider has the resources to offer a very wide range of activities to the young people living here. One young person said 'It's brilliant here, we can do lots of different things.' These include holiday cottages and caravans in rural locations which the young people love going to. Staff are good at motivating young people to choose an interest and then maintain it. This means that young people can acquire a range of skills and develop their knowledge in a particular area. For example, one young person has made a number of wooden articles, including a decorated box and bedside table, which show great technical competence. This young person's latest project is to make a run for her pet rabbit. The provider has a farm where young people can help in looking after animals and ride horses. This helps young people to develop empathy and consideration for others. In addition to the sheer enjoyment and health benefits that these leisure activities bring, young people have become visibly more confident and proud of their achievements. Young people can also join community organisations, for example Army Cadets, which enables them to make friends outside the home.

The home provides a calm, spacious and well-appointed environment, with lots of facilities and space for group activities. There is a variety of books, toys and games

appropriate to the young people's ages. One young person said 'One of the best things about here is being able to play with the other children.' There is also ample space if young people want to have quiet time alone. The high quality of the accommodation helps young people to realise that they are valued and deserve the best.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The home provides a caring cocoon for young people where they feel safe. Staff are alert to any threat to young people, whether it be inside or outside the home, and take appropriate steps to manage it. Staff are creative in helping young people to understand how to keep themselves safe when outside the home. For example, staff asked community police officers to talk to one young person who had placed herself in a vulnerable situation. As a result, the young person now realises the importance of taking sensible precautions with regard to people they don't know. One social worker commented 'Safety is paramount in the home.' Another wrote 'My young person feels safe for the first time in their life.' Although there are occasional disagreements between the young people, incidents of bullying are extremely rare. Staff are highly alert to any behaviour that might lead to bullying, including that with a racist element, and address it quickly and effectively. As a result, young people have no worries that they might be intimidated or hurt.

Since the last inspection there has only been one incident where a young person has gone missing. Staff acted very quickly to look for them and return them to the home within a short time. However, the record of the incident is not complete. This means that full details of what happened are not clear and so hampers proper monitoring of such incidents.

The quality of the relationships within the home enables staff to shape the behaviour of young people in an unobtrusive way which maintains their dignity. All staff provide a consistent structure and ethos which helps the young people be clear about what is expected of them. Staff constantly encourage positive behaviour in day-to-day living. They quietly check minor lapses and praise young people when they do something well or unselfishly. As a result, the use of physical restraint is relatively infrequent and used only to prevent harm to the young people or others. However, the record of restraint does not describe the method used in plain language nor does it always detail the duration of the restraint. This means it is not possible to be assured that young people have not been handled inappropriately or harmed as a result of the restraint.

Leadership and management

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

The management of the home is generally sound, and staff work with a common purpose and shared values. The manager ensures that the staff team work

consistently in order to meet the needs of the young people.

The Children's Guide is written in language which is child-friendly and thus easy to understand. It describes what young people can expect when they come here and fully outlines their rights and who to contact if they have any concerns. However, the document is a generic one which applies to all the provider's homes, and so does not summarise, for example, how many young people live here. As a result, young people do not have all the information about the home which they should have on admission.

The provider monitors the quality of care within the home on a monthly basis. However, this monitoring does not include consultation with the parents of young people. This means that their views about the home and the service it provides cannot be taken into account. The manager also provides Ofsted with a six-monthly summary of her internal monitoring of the home. However, this does not record any consultation with young people or their parents. Additionally, although there are some sound systems for consultation with placing authorities, the results of this are not incorporated into the monitoring. As a result, it is more difficult to evaluate trends or issues of concern and to rectify shortfalls in practice. Also, some accidents involving young people have not been recorded within the monitoring. This means that neither the manager nor the regulator can identify possible patterns relating to hazards which may expose young people to ongoing risk.

Staffing levels within the home are sufficient to meet the needs of young people and keep them safe. From time to time, staff work on their own. However, there is a good system in place to provide prompt support if needed from duty managers, and this gives both staff and young people confidence. Staff are appropriately qualified and receive additional training to enhance their skills. The manager uses regular supervision to support staff and to ensure that their practice is professional and effective. In addition, there are regular staff meetings. These focus on the young people's needs and enable staff to reflect on their practice and work consistently to promote young people's welfare.

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.