

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 three young people aged between eight and 17 years and whose main need for being looked after is because of emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people, regardless of their cultural background and ability, make good, steady progress in relation to their starting points and thrive in a loving, supportive and caring environment. The care that members of staff provide is of a high, consistent quality and is delivered by individuals who are lively, caring and experienced. All young people living at the home are in full-time education. Their attendance and achievement at school is both promoted and actively supported. Attending formal education is given a very high priority at the home. In addition, young people take part in an extensive range of leisure activities, which includes swimming, gardening, cross-stitch, picnics and animal welfare. Young people are also encouraged to participate in activities which present a physical challenge to them such as hill walking and camping. Successful completion of all these activities helps young people to develop their maturity, self-confidence and self-esteem. Young people and members of staff have a warm, friendly relationship based on mutual respect. One young person said, 'I like the staff because they are the best'.

The manager and members of staff are always looking for ways to improve and enhance the services they provide. The diverse needs of the young people using the service create new challenges for staff members who remain adaptable, dedicated and motivated. The home has a development plan in place and both members of staff and management always seek to move the service forward. Young people live in an environment which is adaptable to their needs and strives to deliver the best possible care.

One young person admitted to the home does not have a formal placement plan in place. Placement information has been shared verbally with the home, and the home's management, were able to meet with the young person prior to admission. However, the absence of a placement plan means that important information concerning the young person may be missed. Formal reviews of each young person's care needs are held at regular intervals. The home provides comprehensive information for the review meetings, copies of which are on each young person's file. However, the formal minutes of each review are not available at the home. This means that decisions taken at review meetings about the changing circumstances of

young people may not be carried out appropriately. In addition, one young person who is old enough does not have a comprehensive transition plan in place to aid their move into adulthood and, where necessary, adult care services. The long-term needs of the young person are not highlighted and planning for future care has not taken place.

The home has a Statement of Purpose which highlights what services the home provides and how the needs of young people will be met. The statement of purpose does not however, fully describe the relevant qualifications and experience of all staff members. Placing authorities may not be aware of the diverse skill mix within the full staff team. One child protection enquiry has been instigated at the home since the last inspection. The responsible placing authority determined that no further action would be taken. However, the home's manager did not notify the current regulatory body. This means that the safety of the young person was not independently monitored by the regulator and their safety was not fully protected.

Areas for improvementStatutory 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
5 (2001)	keep under review and, where appropriate, revise the Statement of Purpose and the children's guide (Regulation 5)	31/01/2012
12A (2001)	co-operate with the child's placing authority in agreeing and signing the plan for the child's placement prepared in accordance with the provisions in regulation 9 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 (Regulation 12A)	31/01/2012
30 (2001)	ensure that, any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 5 takes place, the registered person shall without delay notify the persons indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of the table. (Regulation 30)	31/01/2012

Recommendations

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

- identify arrangements for the education and related support of young people so they have access to the full range of educational services (NMS 2.117; Children's Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 5: Children's Homes)
- contribute to the development of each young person's care plan , including the

transition plan for care leavers (NMS 12.2)

- record the results of all statutory reviews of placement plans on the young person's file and individuals responsible for pursuing actions. (NMS 25.8)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

All the young people living at the home are encouraged to learn new things and to experience activities which challenge them. Recent activities undertaken with young people include gardening, an Indian banquet, rock climbing, camping and animal husbandry. This helps young people to grow in confidence, become more confident and to develop their self-esteem.

Each young person has their own key worker. Young people who returned inspection questionnaires said that they enjoyed the time they spend with their key workers. 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 and I like all them all', another said, 'the staff are friendly and helpful'. Young people enjoy very positive relationships with staff members which are based on mutual respect and understanding. One young person's social worker said, 'all the staff speak respectfully to the young people. You can see they appreciate it and respond positively to it.' 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 friendly and welcoming to visitors.

Young people receive consistent levels of support to learn new things and to develop their self-confidence and independence. The home has a well organised system of training in place which it uses to help young people learn activities for daily living and to develop daily living skills. 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. However, one young person who is old enough does not have a formal and comprehensive transition plan in place from their placing authority. The young person will not be fully supported to move successfully into adulthood.

Each young person has an individual health care plan in place, which outlines what their health care needs are and how they will be met. The involvement of all healthcare professionals in each young person's care is recorded. Members of staff are fully aware of each young person's health care needs, and how they are to be met. Young people receive appropriate health care at times when they need it.

The education of young people is given a very high priority. Attendance at school is actively encouraged and supported. All young people living at the home are actively involved in formal education at school or college. The achievement of young people at school is celebrated within the home. One young person said, 'school's ok'. Some young people living at the home have statements of special educational needs.

However, copies of these statements were not readily available within the home. This means that the services which young people can expect to receive in order to help them with their education are not fully known. Staff offer on-going help and advice to young people to help them achieve their targets and to ensure they have the best possible life-chances as they move into adulthood.

Where appropriate, young people are supported and enabled to remain in contact with their families and friends. One young person's social worker said, 'they've been really good here at helping to sort out contact arrangements for my young person. The arrangements in place now better suit her.' 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 **satisfactory**.

The home provides a very warm, comfortable and supportive environment in which young people can develop both physically and emotionally. One young person's social worker said, 'it's really impressive here. One of the best homes I've ever seen.' The home's care planning systems are good, with individual needs identified. Records are maintained and any changes in need are acted upon. Regular monitoring of care plans enables members of staff to evaluate the care they provide and to identify any changes which may be necessary. However, not each young person has a comprehensive placement plan, from their placing authority in place. This means that the individual needs of young people are not identified at the time of their placement and will be unmet. Young people are not fully aware of what a placement at the home is meant to achieve and what their individual goals are. Two young people who returned inspection questionnaires indicated that they did not fully understand what was in their placement plans. Young people are not fully involved in their care and understand what it is the home is trying to achieve for them.

Young people's health and welfare is fully promoted and they are supported to lead an active, healthy lifestyle. Members of staff are aware of each young person's strengths and weaknesses and they provide a supportive environment in which they can develop their independence, challenge themselves and learn new tasks. Members of staff display a very warm, loving, friendly and committed approach to caring for young people. Any young people who are ill or suffer accidents are quickly attended to. One young person said, 'I like the activities we do'. There are written records in place to show that young people eat a healthy, well balanced diet. A fruit bowl is freely available for young people to access if they wish. There is a good approach within the home to promoting the health and well-being of young people. Members of staff offer frequent advice and support on how to stay fit and well.

The home has a clear admissions process for young people. Members of staff work hard to ensure each young person enjoys a positive experience whilst living at the home and is able to develop socially, physically and emotionally. Not all young people admitted to the home have their care needs fully identified by their placing

authority. The home undertakes its own detailed assessment of need prior to admission and care services are provided to meet those needs. However, a lack of information from the placing authority means that the young person's may not be placed in the most suitable home to meet their needs, and some of their needs will not be met.

The home has a detailed complaints process in place and young people are encouraged to voice their concerns. Members of staff said they listen to what young people have to say and they try to resolve any issues promptly. 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 safe and listened to.

Young people enjoy living in a quiet area and are able to participate in an extensive range of purposeful and enjoyable activities, which include shopping trips, visits to local leisure centres and working on a nearby farm. 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, as well as an area where art work can be enjoyed. One young person said, 'I'm happy here', another young person said, 'I like the staff, they are the best.' 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's social worker said, 'I know staff care about my young person, nothing's ever too much trouble for them, they go out of their way to help.' 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 formal systems in place in the home to help ensure the safety and welfare of staff members, visitors and young people. Regular risk assessments are undertaken and reviewed in line with changing circumstances or behaviours of young people. There have been no occasions since the last inspection when young people have been missing from the home. Young people are protected and kept safe from harm.

There has been one safeguarding concern raised at the home since the last inspection. The incident was discussed fully with the responsible social worker and placing authority. After considering all the evidence the placing authority took the decision that no further action was necessary. However, the home's manager did not notify the current regulatory authority of this concern. As a result, no independent monitoring of the allegation or concern took place. The welfare of the young person concerned was not fully safeguarded. The manager and all members of staff are trained in safeguarding. Refresher training is regularly provided 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 and punitive measures such as sanctions and restraint are seldom, if ever, used. Members of staff prefer to use their skills and competencies 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 carries out regular checks of the home's fire systems, smoke detectors and emergency lighting. Young people take part in fire drills, and the time at which fire drills take place are recorded. Regular checks of gas installations and electrical equipment also take place. Full written records are maintained by the home's manager. These measures ensure that young people live in a safe environment and their safety is protected.

Young people benefit from an extremely stable staff team. They are protected by the home's recruitment procedures and are kept safe from potential abuse. 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.

Leadership and management

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

The home's Statement of Purpose does not fully comply with regulations or national minimum standards. The names of staff members are recorded, although their skills and experience are not. Placing authorities, the parents of young people and young people themselves do not know what experience staff members have in looking after young people or what interests they have.

A young people's guide to the home has been written. The young people's guide describes the home and provides important information, which young people may need. Young people know therefore who they can contact if they are unhappy about anything or what they can expect from living at the home.

Young people's files are 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. Formal reviews of each young person's needs are undertaken within statutory timescales. The home fully contributes to this process. However, the home does not retain the formal minutes of all review meetings, which have been held. The home's manager and staff members do not have a formal record of agreed actions and who is responsible for carrying out those actions. 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 routinely seeks the opinions of responsible social workers, staff members and the young people living there with regard to how the home is run. This enables young people to contribute to improving the quality of their care.

Young people are looked after by members of staff whose knowledge and practice is up to date. The organisation does demonstrate a commitment to training all staff and in ensuring their training is current. Members of staff gain the skills and competencies necessary to look after young people and retain those which they already have.

Young people receive care from a well supported staff team who are comfortable taking decisions. The home's manager ensures that all members of staff receive formal supervision on a regular basis. In addition, regular staff meetings are also held. One staff member spoken to said, 'the office door is always open if I have an issue I want to discuss and I don't have to wait until supervision'. This helps staff members to feel valued and supported in their work.

Overall, the home's manager provides effective management to the staff team 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 action taken. The home has a development plan in place, which is freely available in the manager's office. The home's manager and members of staff are aware of the home's strengths and weaknesses.

Young people are given the opportunity to experience a full range of new activities and challenges. This helps them to develop their social awareness, confidence and self esteem. Staff members are motivated and are encouraged to create new opportunities for the young people living at the home. One young person's social worker said, 'my young person's made so many improvements in such a short time. You can see she's emotionally and physically better. She presents better and is better in herself.'

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.