

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Jacqueline Malcolm
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This is a private children's home registered to provide care and accommodation for up to eight young people who may be experiencing emotional or behavioural difficulties.

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**.

Children and young people make good progress and receive an excellent quality of care. In particular they are progressing well in their education, health and behaviour. Children and young people feel safe and consider themselves well cared for by staff. Good relationships with safeguarding, social care and external services are sustained and promote children and young people's safety and welfare. Children and young people are thriving from their starting points. Their views are listened to and taken into account regarding their placement plans and the operation of the home. Children and young people are well supported to maintain contact with their family and significant people, which promotes their identity needs.

Children and young people are cared for by a stable staff team who are caring, passionate and protective of them. The staff team value and have high aspirations for all children and young people. Staff receive excellent training and opportunities to develop their practice. They are well managed by a competent and experienced manager who understands the needs of the service. A development plan is in place to drive improvement and the home has capacity to improve.

However, there are some breaches in regulations and shortfalls in meeting the national minimum standards. Shortfalls relate to the Statement of Purpose; the availability of up to date personal education plans; clear and up to date records, including the sanction and restraint records that do not fully meet regulations; and aspects of the premises. These shortfalls do not impact on the safety and welfare of young people, but does undermine the existing good practices in the home.

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
11 (2001)	ensure that the children's home is conducted so as to make proper provision for the care, education, supervision and where appropriate, treatment of children accommodated there. In particular, ensure all children have a current personal education plan (Regulation 11(1)(b))	31/08/2012
17A (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline in a children's home, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purposes and fully meets the regulations (Regulation 17B)	31/08/2012
31 (2001)	ensure that all parts of the children's home used by children are kept clean and reasonably decorated and maintained. In particular, ensure that the bedsit is fit for purpose so that it promotes children's health, safety and well-being. (Regulation 31(2)(e))	31/08/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the children's home has a clear Statement of Purpose which is available to and understood by staff and children and reflected in any policies, procedures and guidance and is available to the responsible authority and any parent or person with parental responsibility (NMS 13.1)
- ensure records are clear, up to date and stored securely, and contribute to an understanding of the child's life. (NMS 28)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Children and young people make good progress in all aspects of their development. This is strongly underpinned by the therapeutic practice model used by the home, known as The Pillars of Parenting recovery program. The model is used to assess and review children and young people's development, emotional recovery and progress in eight specific areas. The consistent good care and nurturing support that

children and young people receive help them develop a positive self-view and emotional resilience. They are forming trusting and appropriate attachments with good adult role models who reinforce clear boundaries that make children and young people feel safe.

Children and young people enjoy good health and are supported to live a healthy lifestyle. Their health needs are assessed by a looked after children's nurse, who is in regular contact with them. This ensures that children and young people's health needs are identified and met. Children and young people attend medical, dental and optical appointments. Psychological support is provided to children and young people who need it. Children and young people say that staff look after them if they feel unwell. Children and young people who smoke are actively discouraged. Younger children placed at the home as established smokers no longer smoke. This impressive outcome has been achieved by the staff teams zero tolerance approach to smoking, especially when this involves much younger children. Healthy meals provided ensure that children and young people enjoy a healthy, balanced diet. Children and young people enjoy a choice of meals from other cultures as well as their own.

Children and young people make good educational progress from their starting points. They attend the on-site registered school and are excellent attendees. This is particularly notable for children and young people who have missed a significant amount of schooling. Their educational achievement is good in relation to their starting points. Children and young people are ambitious about what they want to achieve and are all studying towards their individual goals. For example, GCSE's, college and progressing into mainstream school. Children and young people say that staff make sure that they go to school and are helped with their schoolwork. However, not all personal education plans are up to date. A personal education plan has not been received by the home, despite several requests made to the placing local authority.

Children and young people enjoy making a positive contribution to their home and the wider community. For example, they are involved in home improvements and most have recently redecorated their rooms. Children and young people had a party in to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. On a voluntary basis, dog walking is a positive activity that children and young people are involved in. Children and young people enjoy hobbies and interests. Examples of these include martial arts, gym, music, dance, drama and the arts. Plans are in place for children and young people to take a summer holiday. These activities counter social isolation, boost individual confidence levels and reduce incidents of anti-social behaviour.

Children and young people benefit from regular contact with their family and significant people. This reinforces their sense of identity. They are supported by staff who ensure their contact is appropriately facilitated. Staff are acutely aware about the impact of contact and help children and young people through any difficulties. Staff are highly supportive and engaging with parents, working with them in the best interests of the children.

All children and young people say that they are supported to develop independence skills. This is irrespective of their age and ability. For example, learning to cook and bake, keeping safe, maintaining good personal hygiene, tidying their bedrooms and understanding the value of money. Children and young people are learning how to behave age appropriately and take responsibility for their behaviour.

Quality of care

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

Children and young people's quality of care and welfare is highly central to care practices. This is exceptional and the outcome for children and young people is that they are thriving. Staff know children and young people's personalities well. They have high aspirations and value the children and young people in their care. Excellent, trusting relationships have developed over time between staff, children and young people. They understand and know how to respond to challenging behaviours and address children and young people's difficulties with care. Children and young people understand the home's routines and boundaries that staff consistently reinforce. This makes them feel safe and understand the importance of respect for one another. Sanctions and rewards promote positive behaviours. Although children and young people still present with behavioural challenges, the measures in place have reduced.

Children and young people know about their placement plans and are involved in their development. The plans provide an individual, holistic approach to childcare and are reviewed in conjunction with the therapeutic model. Regular practice and team meetings are held to ensure children and young people are cared for within the plans and care management strategies are effective. A therapist attends the meetings and offers advice to assist the team in caring for children and young people. Placement plans take account of children and young people's needs arising from their cultural background and personal identity. All young people say that their cultural beliefs are respected and supported. Staff represent positive role models that children and young people can identify with.

Children and young people's views, wishes and feelings are actively and regularly sought. Key work sessions are in common with the therapeutic model and concur with placement plans. Children and young people say that their time spent with their key worker is 'good' and 'very good'. Children and young people are actively engaged in their key work sessions and have excellent opportunities to influence their progress. Monthly young people's meetings enable children and young people to have a say on how the home is run. Children and young people are actively encouraged to engage in their statutory reviews and represent their views. Children and young people's complaints are dealt with promptly. Mediation is promoted as appropriate. Access to independent advocacy support is available to children and young people.

Children and young people benefit from living in a healthy environment. They make good use of activities where they live in a rural setting and participate in a range of

healthy activities and eating habits.

Staff place a high value on education and work closely with the school. They promote and support children and young people's school attendance and have high aspirations for them. All of the children and young people have life ambitions. Those who show interests and abilities in certain areas are well guided to help make their vision a reality.

The home is a large building, located on extensive grounds. The school is based on the same site and is separated by fencing. Children and young people have their own rooms and some have recently redecorated their rooms to suit their individual tastes. The lounge, kitchen, dining and play room provide a homely environment for children and young people. Children and young people treat the home as their own and appear comfortable in their surroundings. Home improvements, including repairs resulting from damage have commenced and form part of the home's development plan.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children and young people say they feel safe. They know that staff care about them and want to keep them safe at all times. Children and young people have identified adults who they can talk to if they feel unhappy about something. One young person said 'This is one of the care homes I feel safe at'. Young people who present with risky behaviours or are at risk of sexual exploitation are protected by staff practices. They are also protected by proactive interventions from safeguarding professionals, such as social workers, police and other external agencies. Therapeutic advice is regularly sought and plans are implemented and reviewed to safeguard and closely monitor risky behaviours. Staff effectively use their safeguarding training to ensure that children and young people who make disclosures are promptly responded to and supported. Children and young people do not identify bullying as an issue. Most children and young people say that staff deal with bullying when it happens. High staff supervision levels ensure bullying behaviour is identified and dealt with.

Children and young people who go missing from home are protected. Examples include individual missing from home risk assessments, agreed protocol with the police and individual agreements. All key professionals are informed when children and young people are missing from home. This ensures that their absence is prioritised and their safety and welfare is safeguarded. Children and young people return quickly and the reasons for them going missing from home are routinely sought.

Positive behaviour is actively promoted and restraint is not regularly used. However, when restraint or physical intervention is used, the records do not fully meet the regulations. Positive relationships between children, young people and staff ensure an open environment whereby appropriate and inappropriate behaviours are discussed. Behaviour management strategies help children and young people

understand the impact that their behaviour may have on others. Staff are good at identifying children and young people's individual triggers and use de-escalation and diffusion techniques to minimise incidents. Some children and young people who present with extreme behaviours has reduced over time and socially acceptable behaviour has increased. Children and young people are developing an improved insight into their behaviour and respond well to positive incentives.

Recruitment and selection procedures have been strengthened. The manager has been trained on the safer recruitment course and telephone enquiries are made to referees to verify references. These improvements reduce the risk to children and young people, for example, being exposed to adults who may harm or be unable to protect them. Young people are involved in interviewing new staff and their views are taken seriously.

Health and safety practices in the main support a physically safe environment. For example, fire and gas appliances are checked, fire drills are carried out and health and risk assessments are regularly reviewed. However, an up to date risk assessment has not been completed for one of the bedsits to be occupied by a young person. It is therefore not clear how health and safety risks are minimised or eliminated. Young people's individual risk assessments are reviewed in accordance with their changing behaviours.

Leadership and management

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

The staff team is managed by a very competent and experienced Registered Manager. The manager is child-focused. She has high expectations of the team and is satisfied that staff can support children and young people to reach their full potential. Staff members hold the manager in high regard, feel well led and are passionate about their care of the children and young people.

Staff are well established, motivated and sufficient in number. A large number have worked at the home for a long time and are qualified and experienced in childcare. Staff feel well supervised, supported and valued. Excellent training opportunities enable staff to develop their knowledge which is appropriate to the children and young people's needs. Newly recruited staff feel that their personal development needs are met, through a range of training courses. All staff are at various points of learning about the home's therapeutic model of care. Positively, a number are working towards a research foundation degree. Staff express high levels of satisfaction about training opportunities and the manager is currently studying towards a psychology degree. This demonstrates an impressive investment in the staff team's professional development.

Management monitoring of the home identifies the home's strengths and most areas for development. This is undertaken by internal and external management processes. In recent months, Regulation 33 visits have been undertaken by the organisations directors. They ensure that the manager is accountable to raising standards and will

visit the home two weeks after visits for improvement updates. This is good because it ensures raised standards in the home and supports the manager to make all necessary changes. The development plan in place is regularly reviewed and it aims to drive current and future improvement. An example includes plans to improve the home environment. However, some remedial work is needed to ensure all rooms used by children and young people are maintained to a high standard. For example, one of the bedsits recently occupied by a young person is not ready for them to move into. For instance, the bedroom smells of damp and the extent of the presence of damp is not fully known. A dehumidifier used to resolve the problem has no impact. There is no suitable window covering in the bedroom or lighting in the bathroom. Carpets and decor are showing signs of wear and tear and a health and safety risk assessment has not been done. The bathroom window is being measured so that a bespoke blind can be fitted to ensure young people's privacy. The manager has agreed that this bedsit will not be used until these issues are resolved.

All recommendations, with the exception of one made at the last inspection have been met. The Statement of Purpose has not been updated to clearly demonstrate how children's health and education needs will be met. The types of accommodation, including the sleeping arrangements are not made clear in this document. These are outstanding issues carried over from the last full inspection.

Children and young people's files are in generally good order. However, not all records pertaining to children and young people are clear and up to date. For example, it is not clear how all complaint outcomes are reached from details in the complaints book. Some of the decisions following complaints to refer issues to house meetings are not all recorded, so it is not clear if they have been resolved. Restraint and sanction records do not fully meet the regulation and copies of the measures are not maintained in individual files. Sanctions are not maintained in one volume. Restraints or physical interventions are maintained in one volume, but the pages are not numbered. The records do not include confirmation that the authorised person making the record has spoken to the child concerned and the person using the measure about their actions. Details of any methods to avoid the need to use a measure are not clearly recorded. Some late entries in documents does not promote contemporaneous recording.

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.