

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Roy Bega
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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

A private organisation owns and manages this home. The home offers residential placements for up to six children of either sex, who are between the ages of eight and 16 years. It specialises in providing therapeutic care for children who have experienced trauma in their lives and display a variety of behavioural problems.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people thrive in a warm family environment tailored to meet their individual needs. They are kept safe and are very well supported by a committed and motivated staff team. Young people are confident and reassured that their needs are focused on at all times because of the positive professional relationships they have with staff.

Excellent support is provided to meet health care and developmental needs. Education is highly valued and achievements are very well supported and celebrated. Young people are actively encouraged to make their views known about their care plans and their experience of life in the home. Young people benefit from extensive support in maintaining or rebuilding appropriate contact with people important to them.

The home has an experienced, dedicated and stable staff team who provide consistent care for young people. A cohesive management team are resourceful in providing substantial staff support and training. Excellent systems are in place to monitor the quality of care in the home, with management and staff being well motivated in examining and improving practice.

Areas for improvement

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make exceptional progress within a caring, nurturing environment enhanced by firm, fair and consistent boundaries. This is individually demonstrated through areas such as the reduction of challenging behaviour, a noticeable reduction of being missing from home and care, and the increase of personal confidence and self-esteem. Staff have extensive knowledge and understanding of young people's needs and create opportunities in promoting the best possible life outcome for individuals.

Young people are actively encouraged to make positive choices and to use every opportunity to develop and reach their individual potential. Placement plans recognise young people's individuality and encourage the celebration of difference. The home actively acknowledges racial, religious, gender and other differences and encourages open discussion and learning on such issues. Young people are assisted to develop a healthy sense of self and to recognise the rights and feelings of others. This enables them to more easily engage with the wider community. The home offers young people a wide range of activities and encourages them to pursue their own particular interests, for example, gymnastics, performing arts, youth clubs, horse riding, and kick boxing. This provides opportunities for young people to have new experiences, learn new skills and increase self-confidence.

Young people are given every opportunity to make decisions about the running of the home and their future. They feel listened to and valued because staff actively support them in becoming confident in having their say. Where they have made requests and suggestions which cannot be acted upon, staff fairly explain the reasons.

Young people are fully encouraged to take appropriate responsibility for their own health needs and make informed decisions about their life style. Staff are actively involved in engaging with young people about a range of health-related issues regarding emotional and psychological well-being and personal fitness, for example, following a 'quit smoking' programme. Where appropriate, this is enhanced by interaction with internal and external specialist health professionals. Every young person has a fully completed health care plan that includes all of the required information as part of their wider placement plan. Young people confirm staff are very approachable, listen to them and are understanding and supportive in ensuring their health needs are met.

The educational achievement and school attendance of young people are exceptional, taking into account both their attainment and progress from their starting point at the commencement of their placement. Following a full assessment of need, educational plans are agreed which take into account individual starting points, ability and current situation. Young people benefit from staff working closely with other agencies and strongly advocating on their behalf to ensure they receive education based on their individual assessed needs. Proactive and continual communications with differing education facilities ensures individual needs, weaknesses and strengths are fully understood by all professionals involved.

Young people are actively encouraged and supported to maintain contact with their families and people in their lives who are significant to them. Where relationships are estranged, staff are resourceful in working effectively with other agencies involved to ensure appropriate and agreed strategies are followed. Staff demonstrate excellent knowledge of individual contact arrangements, which are contained in detailed care records.

Young people develop age-appropriate self-care and practical independent living skills, achieved by the excellent support and the clear routines and expectations that

are in place. Where planned moving on takes place, young people achieve very successful transitions to independence. They build on the social networks they have been supported to establish while at the home and maintain education. Even when young people choose to leave in an unplanned way, they maintain contact with the home and use the support of staff to move forward.

Discussions with placing authorities' social workers confirm young people make exceptional progress within the caring nurturing environment of the home. Comments received include: 'management and staff are proactive in meeting the needs of the young person'; 'staff have received specific training in meeting the young person's needs'; 'things put in place to help the young person overcome their difficulties are brilliant'; 'incidents of negative behaviour have noticeably decreased, they are very good at ensuring the young person's educational needs are met'; and 'they ensure good appropriate contact is maintained with mum'.

Quality of care

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

The composition of the staff team provides a good mix of gender, age and experience. Positive relationships between staff and young people foster a culture of openness where questions can easily be raised. The lack of formal complaints recorded is attributed to the ease with which young people raise issues with the staff team and manager.

Consultation with young people is evident through day-to-day discussions, weekly house meetings and individually through key-work sessions. Young people are involved with the running of the home and decision making for matters such as the selection of menus, activities, new equipment, new furniture, and staff recruitment. Comments made confirm that this helps them learn to negotiate and develop confidence in expressing themselves. They are also helped to understand that not all requests for new items or activities are possible and clear reasons are given as to why this is the case.

Highly detailed individual placement and daily living plans provide extensive information on how young people are to be cared for. Staff are conversant with the system and meticulous in the delivery, ensuring that agreed interventions and needs are met while being sensitive towards young people's backgrounds. They ensure that young people are given time, space and opportunities to confront their past experiences while offering levels of support which are appropriate and carefully thought through. Young people are actively involved in their care plans, which promotes confidence in having a say in their own life. This open culture and inclusion embraces a raft of key values for allowing young people to feel safe and fearless of speaking out.

There is a strong focus on promoting young people's physical and emotional well-being. Staff proactively encourage young people to recognise the importance of visiting the dentist regularly and having annual health checks. Every young person

has a fully completed health care plan that includes all of the required information as part of their wider placement plan. Appropriate support from medical professionals is provided and a high level of liaison takes place between staff and these professionals to ensure young people's health needs are fully met. All staff have up-to-date training in basic first aid, administration of medication and food hygiene. The home has appropriate consents in place that allow for emergency treatment if needed.

Staff are proactive and consistent in supporting the educational achievement of young people, engaging with their schools and successfully promoting their attendance. The integrated services for looked after young people assess young people's educational needs and, in conjunction with the home and other external organisation, ensure the appropriate education provision is provided for the young people.

Young people are provided with a range of purposeful and enjoyable activities that reflect their personality and individuality. Staff actively promote diversity and encourage young people to openly express their beliefs and engage in activities that enable young people to feel comfortable about who they are.

Management and staff are highly active in ensuring that diversity is celebrated and valued, while being resourceful in challenging any form of discrimination. High regard is given to young people's particular needs arising from their heritage, culture, or linguistic backgrounds. Staff work to meet these needs positively, with care, consideration and sensitivity.

Young people live in a quiet residential area. The accommodation provides a pleasant, warm and comfortable home that young people enjoy living in. Furnishings and decoration are to a good standard. Young people are encouraged to personalise their bedrooms and are involved in choosing the décor. Staff ensure they apply a high level of privacy by respecting young people's needs for time alone and always knock on bedroom doors.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Safeguarding young people is a priority and their welfare is very important and central to practice. Young people are supported to learn how to keep themselves safe and learn about the risks and potential risks their behaviours and actions may lead to. Where particular risks are identified, prompt communication takes place with social workers to consider appropriate responses. In addition, advice is sought from the Local Safeguarding Children Board, as appropriate. Staff spend a great deal of time talking through any identified concerns to develop young people's own understanding of safety issues and the reasons adults are concerned. As a result, young people's risk-taking behaviours reduce and they feel cared for and protected.

Staff receive annual training in respect of child protection and safeguarding and have

access to clear information. They demonstrate a sound understanding of the action to take should they have any concerns regarding a young person's safety or well-being.

Incidents where young people go missing from this home are minimal due to exceptionally high staffing levels and positive staff/young people relationships. Staff are well aware of young people's vulnerabilities and are very clear what action to take should such an incident occur, including good protocols with the police. Likewise, incidents of bullying are rare, again due to the very close supervision by staff, good placement planning and excellent knowledge of young people's needs and vulnerabilities.

Young people are actively engaged in their care plans and identifying areas of behaviour to change from which they would benefit. The behaviour management approach is fundamentally founded on relationships with the staff, who young people hold in high regard. Staff show a sincere interest in young people's lives, and in turn, young people want to do well. Young people feel they are treated fairly and feel proud of their progress.

Young people benefit from a stable staff team. Staff working with young people in the home are carefully selected and vetted. The home has suitably robust procedures in place, including a systematic approach that ensures that the company's policy and practice are effective.

The manager ensures that regular monitoring of health and safety takes place to make sure the home is physically safe and secure. All fire and maintenance checks are completed and well documented, and staff and young people are well aware of the fire procedure and what action to take in the event of a fire.

Leadership and management

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

This is an outstanding service that provides young people with a high level of care. The home is effectively and efficiently managed. The staff team are fully committed, motivated and driven to deliver the best possible outcomes for young people. This is a result of efficient management that actively promotes development within the workforce and provides opportunities for staff to enhance their skills. Staff say they all work well as a team and managers are excellent.

Staff are provided with an excellent range of training, including mandatory courses in safeguarding, first aid and the administration of medication. The manager of the home ensures that time is available for all staff to attend training, which further promotes the welfare of the young people. All staff working at the home have a qualification in caring for children or are working towards it. Comments received include, 'my training needs are a fixed item for my supervision', 'I am being well supported in completing formal childcare training', 'we have annual refresher training in the mandatory areas such as child protection', and, 'the company provides

specialist training to meet the needs of young people before they are admitted'.

Young people appreciate a staffing structure which has clear lines of accountability in providing a stable living environment. High staffing levels, at a ratio of one-to-one, are maintained in line with the company's policy to ensure that young people are properly supervised and able to take part in structured and non-structured activities. Staff are deployed with sufficient time to undertake individual work with young people, to attend regular team meetings and to complete necessary paperwork. All staff have regular monthly supervision sessions with their line manager, which ensures that staff development and training needs are identified and promoted. Staff commented, 'management are very supportive and provide excellent supervision', and, 'I receive outstanding guidance and professional input'.

The manager and staff demonstrate a strong commitment to reviewing and improving the service that is offered to young people and their families. Team meetings are used to look at practice issues and the needs of the young people. This ensures that all staff are aware of any issues relating to young people's behaviour, and approaches in meeting them are consistent. The home has monthly Regulation 33 inspections which report on the quality of care provided and record any shortfalls, to which the manager promptly responds. The manager undertakes monthly Regulation 34 monitoring and uses these as part of the quality assurance for the improvement and development plan of the home.

Excellent administrative arrangements are in place for supporting young people's care. These arrangements ensure each young person's exclusive and confidential records are maintained securely and include all the information necessary to plan and deliver their care. Records are carefully organised to permit ease of access to particular information which provides young people with ready access on request.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.