

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Louise Redfern / David Morgan
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Provision subtype	Children's home

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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

This children's home provides care and accommodation for up to five young persons of either gender aged from eight up to the age of 17 years. The home is owned by a private childcare organisation.

The home is located in a quiet village. Accommodation is provided in a detached family house, converted from a former school premises, in the village. This provides young people with individual bedrooms and ample communal space. The home's positioning in a village not far from the outskirts of a large town facilitates easy access to schools and a wide variety of recreational, social and sporting activities.

Overall effectiveness

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

The home provides a good quality of care. Young people are generally positive about the care they receive and they feel safe. Young people benefit from good standards in areas such as family contact, general health care and education. Recreational and social activities are wide-ranging and serve to help young people gain confidence self-esteem and develop good community links. They make good progress overall and are safeguarded well.

The home provides young people with good individualised care. Young people undertake some independence work. However staff do not sufficiently encourage age-appropriate independence, in order to prepare young people for leaving the home into independent living. The risks associated with the age group are insufficiently assessed resulting in young people not learning from measured risk-taking behaviour and being prepared to live independently.

There are shortfalls in the home which relate to fire safety, young people taking measured risks, access to files and young people being appropriately sanctioned for negative behaviour.

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
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32 (2001)	ensure the registered person shall take adequate precautions against the risk of fire, provide adequate means of escape. Ensure by means of fire drills and practices, that the persons working at the home and children living accommodated there are aware of the procedures to be followed in case of fire. (Regulation 32 (1(a)(b)(e)).	23/12/2011
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Recommendations

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

- ensure the sanctions and rewards for behaviour are clear, reasonable and fair (NMS 3.8)
- ensure that staff encourage children to take appropriate risks as a normal part of growing up, with reference to use of mobile phones (NMS 4.4)
- ensure children have good access to electronic forms of contact, including the internet to maintain family contacts and friendships and to promote their learning (NMS 8.2 and 9.1)
- ensure that risk reduction does not lead to an institutional feel and that risk assessments are carried out to identify potential sources of harm and are regularly reviewed, with regard to bed times, bedroom door alarms and door bolts (NMS 10.3)
- ensure adequate staffing levels are maintained on individual shifts, to meet the needs of all children resident in the home (NMS17.1)
- ensure all existing staff have attained a minimum level 3 qualification (NMS 18.5)
- ensure that children are actively encouraged read their files, other than confidential or third party information. (NMS 22.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people develop a positive self-view and grow in confidence and skills. Young people achieve this through good education expectations, positive relationships with the staff team and by engaging in positive activities within both the home and the community. Staff working in the home are carefully vetted and are considered suitable to be working with vulnerable young people.

Young people's health including their physical, emotional and psychological well-being is well supported. Staff ensure young people are living in a healthy environment. For example, young people are encouraged to attend health appointments with their doctors, dentist and therapist. Young people benefit from

engaging in equine therapy, which has substantially developed their self-esteem and emotional resilience. The home has effective relationships with local mental health services team and company therapist. These enable the staff team to access specialist support in their work with the young people. The young people receive consistent care, which takes account of their emotional well-being.

The young people benefit from individual, purposeful, tailored and achievable education plans. The outcome for the young people is substantial academic attainment and achievements that the home recognises and celebrates. Young people make a positive contribution to their home and the wider community. For example, young people are encouraged to make friendships and actively participate in local activities such as football and fishing. Young people have taken an active part in the re-decoration of parts of the home, for example painting the games room. This gives the young people a sense of ownership of the home.

Young people benefit from appropriate contact with their families and friends. Good work by staff in supporting family contact helps young people feel settled, maintain cultural links and contributes to their general well-being. Young people in the home are strongly supported in having their views around the levels of contact heard by local authorities. Young people make steady progress towards independence. Some transition work is in place, although it is inconsistently applied. The young people do have an awareness of the expectations around transition work and demonstrate success in several areas such as cooking, however, this is not applied for all. This results in young people not making as much progress as necessary before they leave the home.

Quality of care

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

Young people broadly enjoy positive and constructive relationships with staff and the Registered Manager, who are warm and supportive towards them. Young people generally behave appropriately in the home and towards each other. There is broad awareness within the group of young people of individuals needs. One young person commented 'Staff are all awesome and they have coped with me better than other homes.'

Young people have a good range of care plans and placement plans in place to help manage their individual needs. The home is working proactively and in collaboration with other professionals, including social workers and therapists, to improve outcomes for young people. Young people do have key workers in place, however when these change, young people are not always consulted. This results in a less of empowerment and consistency for young people.

Young people understand how to make a complaint in the home. They are supported well by the Registered Manager and staff team to pursue external complaints. Young people have ample opportunities to individually raise their views and wishes regarding the home in key work sessions and as part of young people's meetings

Young people played a key role in formulating the Registered Manager's development plan. However, there is no discussion in the young people's meetings about the running of the home or information-sharing around monitoring visits. This limits the impact of young people have on developing the home.

There is a satisfactory range of systems in place to protect young people in the home. However, some of these are unnecessarily restrictive for older teenagers. Young people are not able to fully develop their independence skills within the bounds of these measures. Some examples are, the routine use of door alarms 24 hours a day, routines which are set to meet the needs of staff shift times and young people's mobile phones being routinely handed to staff overnight.

Young people access a good variety of social and leisure opportunities based on their individual needs. Young people access and attend education, with high levels of attendance. The Registered Manager and staff team celebrate educational achievements of the young people in the home. Despite this strong encouragement of education, young people do not have appropriate free access to the internet in the home, which hinders them from continuing their education at home and maintaining appropriate family and friendship contact electronically. Young people's individual cultural needs are addressed well in their individual plans. However, there is limited attention to educating young people in social and cultural diversity.

The home is a detached property and the exterior is maintained to a good standard and offers space at the rear in which young people relax and play. The home has extensive communal living space for the young people to relax. Some rooms have benefitted from recent re-decoration and are well presented. However, there are some floor coverings, which are not in good condition. This conveys a lower standard of homeliness to young people than the Registered Manager is trying to develop.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people benefit from satisfactory levels of safety in the home. Servicing of equipment, for example, occurs at the necessary intervals. Young people feel safe in and around their home and are well protected from bullying. Staff have an appropriate understanding of safeguarding procedures.

Staff are imposing a number of inappropriate negative consequences on the young people. Also, the decisions routinely ask young people to reflect on their behaviours but staff are not facilitating this. Therefore, young people do not learn from their negative behaviour. The Registered Manager is not regularly reviewing the impact, appropriateness and effectiveness of the negative consequences imposed. As a result, young people do not have sufficient opportunity to explore the impact of these behaviours on themselves and others living in the home. Young people have individual behaviour management plans in place, which are adapted and reviewed as necessary. The plans cover behaviours, triggers of young people and actions used by

staff to support young people. One young person commented 'They recognise my triggers and avoid outbreaks.' The manager reviews the use of physical interventions regularly and adapts the individual behaviour management plans accordingly. One young person commented that he had witnessed a physical intervention and thought 'staff did it ok and asked other kids to leave.'

Good risk assessments are in place to help reduce risks to young people. However, they do not adequately address young people's need for increasing levels of independence, the use of door alarms, handing in mobile phones, self-medication, or fire escape issues. One young person commented they did not like it 'cos it's different to my friends' with regard to young people having to hand staff their mobile phones at night.

The fire risk assessment is extensive and up to date but is inaccurate in places. For example, it states that there are four emergency exits but there are five exits. The front door is kept locked with a key and the key is elsewhere, which means the door cannot be used as an emergency exit. In addition, fire drills do not adequately prepare either staff or young people for actual night-time emergencies. For example, doors on exits are routinely bolted, which increases the risk of harm in the event of such an emergency.

Young people rarely go missing. However, if they do go missing they are aware of the procedures staff follow and on their return young people are appropriately and safely responded to.

Leadership and management

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

The home is efficiently and effectively managed. This is because the Registered Manager is experienced and enthusiastic in her role. The Registered Manager is able to deliver good quality care and positively influence others to create a vision of change. One young person commented the quality of care they receive is 'awesome'.

The home has a good Statement of Purpose and young person's guides, which clearly describe the services provided by the home; these are freely accessible to the staff team and young people. As a result, the young people are well informed about essential standards, quality and safety of care provided. Young people benefit from a well-organised admission procedure and feel safe in their new placement with clear expectations from the home.

Young people consistently benefit from a settled and stable staff team. The staff team is a balanced workforce, which takes into consideration equalities, experience, qualifications and skills, who act as appropriate role models. Staff are able to meet the cultural and religious needs of young people. The Registered Manager is motivated to broaden cultural diversity within the home. She is encouraging the young people to get involved to create better understanding of cultural diversity within the home.

Through induction, team meetings and supervision, the staff team are knowledgeable and work consistently with young people. However, limited access to training opportunities and lack of qualified staff has the potential impact on young people's care. Staff are not being afforded the opportunity not broaden their skill-base through training.

The home has two good development plans in place; one is driven by young people and demonstrates extensive consultation with them. Young people's contribution has resulted in improvements around the home, which includes a punch bag installed in the garden and the games room painted by a young person.

There is a well-organised record of significant events, which are reported to the appropriate authorities, such as social workers. This demonstrates that the welfare of young people is actively promoted within the home as the Registered Manager actively acts on serious incidents. There are formal monitoring visits taking place that are well established in the home. There are shortfalls in these monitoring reports, as they are not rigorous in terms of identifying weaknesses in the home and enabling clear actions being put in place, for example the impact of negative consequences within the home.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.