

Inspection report for 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

The home is a two-bedded children's home providing services for young people in crisis between 10 and 18 years of age. The Statement of Purpose for the home indicates that it offers 'intensive and focused support' to young people who may have been previously referred to secure accommodation. The home is rurally located so staff transport is a key feature of how young people access community facilities and services.

Accommodation is provided in a large farmhouse-style home affording young people individual bedrooms and ample communal space. Education is provided on site for young people of school age by a qualified tutor. Life and social skills development are encouraged and supported by care staff in the home.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people live in a caring and supportive home environment that encourages and enables them to make significant, meaningful progress across all areas of their life. Very good, personalised care planning competently addresses each young person's specific needs enabling them to achieve excellent outcomes by developing skills, self-confidence and emotional resilience.

Effective safeguarding processes ensure that young people are protected from significant harm. Young people learn and practise strategies that will help safely reintroduce them to the wider community. Young people are complimentary about the quality of care and support they receive from their staff team. By interacting positively with their carers they are well nurtured over their period of placement as demonstrated through the development of the meaningful and trusting staff /child relationships underpinning social learning.

The views of young people are central to the running of the home by being fully involved in the decisions that affect their lives and the homes daily functions. They significantly influence all aspects of the care being offered and amendments to any aspect of the homes provision. By being actively listened to a sense of worth and ownership is engendered in young people. Care planning and practice is personalised and fully meets the specialist needs of each young person.

A committed, competent and well-trained staff team ensure young people are well cared for. Staff display the right mix of skills and experience combined with a detailed knowledge of the young people they care for, enabling appropriate informed support and guidance to be provided.

The home is effectively managed. The emphasis on good quality and meaningful childcare practice is supported by promoting young peoples access to full-time education both on site and in the community. The home effectively demonstrates its continuous improvement and development through its presentation, policies and practice. Comprehensive and informative monitoring systems confirming the quality of care continuously help to improve outcomes for young people.

Areas for improvement

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people in the home are making excellent progress to develop their social and practical skills and by doing so improve their self-image. Assisted by caring staff they are enabled to develop their emotional resilience, by understanding the reasons for their placement. By developing trusting relationships with their staff team young people are nurtured, can feel valued and start to make informed choices about their future.

Young people enjoy healthy lifestyles and are helped to take an active interest and responsibility for looking after their own physical and emotional health, subject to their age understanding and level of engagement with the home. Through consistent guidance and informed advice young people access a healthy and well-balanced diet and engage in activities that promote physical exercise. For example, by attending the gym or using the home's trampoline. Through key worker sessions young people are able to make well-informed choices about their health as they receive detailed information on a wide-range of health and social issues, including sexual health, relationships, and the dangers of smoking and alcohol and substance misuse.

Young people are making very good progress with their education. They attend the providers own registered on-site school or college with transport help from the home. Attendance is excellent. Young people say that they enjoy college and the self-responsibility it promotes. On-site learning skilfully matches young people's interests with the set curriculum. Records, reports and young people's work on display confirm that some exceptional work is produced when considering the progress made from individual starting points at the time of placement. Young people are helped to understand the importance of learning and how to develop their skills and abilities through education.

Young people benefit from directed and appropriate contact with their families where this is permitted by placing authorities. Practical staff support enables young people retain and normalise positive relationships with the important people in their lives. Staff are careful to ensure that contact is a controlled, safe and an enjoyable experience, which benefits young people.

Older children are helped to prepare to become more independent in readiness for their eventual transition into adult life. Support is appropriate to their age, level of

understanding and practical skills. Young people are routinely involved in the running of the house including shopping, cooking, tidying and managing their own allowances while being encouraged to take appropriate levels of responsibility for themselves. One young person said, 'I helped in a charity shop which helped me get over my nervousness with strangers'.

Young people's bedrooms are kept very tidy demonstrating that they can look after their belongings and show a sense of pride in their personal space. One young person showed off a collection of autobiographies and magazines, which confirms developing tastes, commitment and improving levels of maturity.

Quality of care

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

Young people are helped to reach their potential by living in a stable, nurturing and supportive environment where their needs are identified and practically addressed. Established residents confirm that they enjoy living in the home and feel well supported by the staff team who care for them. Staff are resourceful in finding ways to help young people help themselves and support them to make progress in all aspects of their lives.

The staff team have high but realistic aspirations for the young people they care for. Bolstered by positive relationships and the provision of consistent day-to-day care, reinforces the homes stability and the potential for individual achievement. Staff effectively assist young people to understand and address their past issues which promotes confidence and enables resilience. Promoting personal security and the feeling of well-being with young people improves social behaviour in public. By improving self-esteem through accentuating good behaviour young people feel valued and view themselves constructively.

Young people recognise the emotional and personal benefits of complying with clearly expressed behavioural expectations and the homes routines. A nurturing structure and busy timetable promotes significant bonding with staff and allegiance to the home by young people. Forming good, safe relationships within a generally calm environment enables problems and disagreements to be quickly and constructively addressed.

Care planning is explicit through placement objectives and individual expectations being introduced at an early stage and regularly reviewed. Young people are aware of the expectations made from them and the support being offered to them to assist in achieving goals. Placement plans effectively record and review aims and objectives. Effective care planning and staff practice shows that all young people are valued as individuals. Their differing needs, backgrounds, interests and views are respected. Young people receive a service that recognises their personal needs, cultural background, and personal identity, including issues of gender, faith, disability and sexual orientation, while promoting tolerance. Staff always make every effort to understand and embrace difference, demonstrating this in their day-to-day practice

by giving importance to even the smallest issues that young people raise. Staff have a comprehensive knowledge of the young people they work with and use this to ensure their needs are properly addressed. The rights and responsibilities of young people are practically promoted and understood.

The review of each young person's placement takes place regularly ensuring that objectives are being met, are appropriately recorded and consider any developments or safeguarding issues. Young people are empowered to be totally involved in the review of their plans. They attend review meetings and fully contribute to the written submissions being presented by their key workers.

Young people are actively consulted in different ways to ensure that their views, wishes and feelings influence the day-to-day running of the home. For example, staff recognise that some young people find it very difficult to express their views in group settings and in such cases special questionnaires are developed and used. Young people can furthermore make their views heard by the organisation by attending forums and arranging company wide events. These positive experiences improve their confidence and self-esteem. This home has organised a fishing competition and presently preparing a celebratory Olympic event. Young people are encouraged to be aware of others who are less fortunate to develop their empathy and improve citizenship. They rise to this challenge by helping charity workers and fundraising. Their achievements are well recorded in the organisations newsletters and in the many photographic displays and albums in the home. Staff always take young people's views seriously while practically helping young people understand why sometimes it is not always practical, safe or possible to act upon their wishes.

All young people in the home know how to complain and any concerns they may express are taken seriously and addressed, usually before they become a complaint. One young person said that 'there's really nothing to complain about in the home!' The manager and staff team are not however complacent about the absence of concerns raised by young people and remain receptive to all issues, however petty, that are brought to their attention. Young people, especially those new to the home, are quickly made aware that they can speak to social workers or advocacy services, such as Childline. Young people confirm that their key worker meetings and general daily interactions provide them with ample opportunity to discuss any concern or emerging issue openly and without fear of criticism. They also have access to a telephone; either a subsidised mobile or the home's portable landline, that enables them to maintain regular contact with family or significant people in their life subject to their placement plan.

Young people live in a healthy environment that actively promotes their physical health and emotional well-being. An active and healthy lifestyle is supported by having a well balanced diet and access to recreational facilities in the community. All staff understand the importance of a healthy eating and a good diet. Nutritious homemade meals, made from fresh ingredients and access to fruit ensure that young people see this as an important component of daily living. Young people confirm that the diet is wholesome and varied and responsive to special requests, for example, the sourcing of special ingredients for ethnic dishes. Young people receive practical

advice about the connection between a healthy diet and keeping fit. They have regular opportunity to assist in meal preparation and recreational cooking with help from staff and they fully acknowledge the importance of sociable, communal meals taken with staff at the dining table.

Young people have regular access to community health services and are registered with a local doctor, dentist and optician. Staff demonstrate an excellent understanding of young people's health needs ensuring that they are fully addressed. Staff assist young people to keep healthy by encouraging routine health checks. Young people receive suitable medical advice and treatment when they are feeling unwell and staff are able to safely administer first aid in an emergency. Safe and effective procedures ensure staff safely manage the arrangements for administering both over the counter and prescribed medication to young people.

The home's daily routine fully supports young people's participation in education and promotes school attendance. Staff support young people's learning by a combination of classroom assistance, supporting educational projects and helping with homework. Young people have access to books, art materials and other educational resources within the home and at the provider's on-site school room. Young people attending further education at college are given practical assistance with travelling and course work to be undertaken at home. A personal computer is made available to facilitate research and internet projects. Attendance is very good and young people are aware of the importance of accessing education. The homes emphasis on personal achievement encourages young people to aspire to obtaining practical skills, certificates and qualification.

Staff support and encourage young people to focus their recreational interests and abilities wherever possible. They facilitate access to a broad range of leisure activities providing meaningful experiences and variety to young peoples lives.

Young people live in a comfortable detached, rurally located farm house that provides a safe haven for vulnerable young people. The house is clean, well decorated and furnished to a very good standard. Young people are well settled and have a strong sense of involvement in the layout and content of their home. Young people confirm that they have helped to decide on the décor of communal areas and have personalised their own rooms. There are no indications of deliberate damage and young people's rooms are kept clean and tidy, which reflects a sense of ownership in the home. The garden confirms young people's interest in environmental matters with its greenhouse, compost and productive pair of chickens.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people live in a supportive and structurally safe environment where they are effectively protected from harm and feel safe and secure. All young people confirmed that they felt safe living at the home, are well supported by all of the staff and are

not being bullied in any way whatsoever.

The safety of young people is prioritised by the home. Staff are very well trained in safeguarding and confirm that they can recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse and know what they need to do to ensure young people are effectively safeguarded. Young people receive practical advice about personal safety, including any potential risk from their peers or adults. Anti-bullying measures are well promoted and monitored vigilantly by staff. Young people are consistently encouraged to talk to their carers when they have worries or concerns. Staff work effectively with social workers and other agencies to ensure vulnerable young people are protected by sharing information and putting safeguarding plans into practice. Staff have access to a whistle blowing policy should they have any concerns about professional safeguarding practice.

The recognised vulnerability of young people is addressed by this placement. Its rural location makes it very suitable for young people who may be at risk if looked after nearer to their community. Some social workers confirmed that this was one of its attractive features. The risks young people may present or face in the community, including exploitation and discrimination, are well recorded and managed. Clear, regularly reviewed risk assessments and explicit placement plans explain how young people will be protected from harm. Staff demonstrate that they are able to balance the need for protection alongside enabling young people to take considered risks that are seen as part of normal adolescent growth and development. In this way young people are able to enjoy similar social experiences to their peers by engaging in recreational activities, such as sports days, charity work and integrating into mainstream education.

The rural location of this home enables it to manage unauthorised absence extremely well. Established protocols and positive relationships with the local police complement practice. Robust responses are in place should young people go absent from the home or from an off site excursion. The stability of the placement through the use of effective supervision and positive engagement between staff and young people is very effective. Staff remain aware of the potential reasons why young people may go missing and use this information to assist young people to manage their feelings and frustrations in an acceptable manner. A proactive stance deters young people from running off and putting themselves in risky or illegal situations.

The behaviour of young people living at this home is usually very good. On admission young people are informed about how the home can help them and what the few house rules are. This key information is reiterated by their children's welcome guide. Through day-to-day living young people confirm that they know the norms of the placement and what standards of behaviour are expected. An emphasis is placed on positive behaviour with young people being rightfully proud of their individual 'positive books', which record at least three good events daily. Young people regularly revisit their individual behavioural plans with key workers to discuss the ongoing and collective expectations for the small group. Staff apply consistent strategies to encourage and support young people to expand socially acceptable behaviour in all situations, both in the home and the wider community.

There are effective responses available to staff for the management of infrequent challenging behaviour by the use of an approved physical restraint methodology. The need to use these measures is extremely rare with improved recording enabling staff and the homes management to review circumstances and effectiveness of such practice. Young people are aware of the circumstances in which such measures may be used while acknowledging these are always in extreme circumstances and only used to ensure they are kept safe. Young people express no concerns about the rewards and sanctions used by the home. A young person wrote that they 'had never been restrained since being at the home'.

Young people live in a physically safe environment. They are protected by an extensive range of health and safety procedures, risk assessments and preventive checks. Staff carry out regular health and safety checks, including fire drills, to ensure the premises are safe and young people know what to do in case of an emergency, especially when they are newly admitted to the home. The recruitment and selection of people working at the home follows robust company procedures and checks that ensure young people are looked after by safe adults. The manager is vigilant in ensuring that all appointed staff possess the relevant skills, competencies and qualifications to meet the needs of looked after young people. Appropriately vigorous systems are in place to ensure that all visitors to the home are suitably checked and supervised while on the premises. In these ways young people are kept safe and effectively protected.

Leadership and management

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

Young people live in a home that is effectively managed and promotes their safety and best interests. The home comprehensively meets the aims of its Statement of Purpose and young people, families and social workers are very clear about the services and support the home provides when accessing this document. The young person's guide is readable and delivers useful information and pictures of what the home provides in an age appropriate friendly tone. To make each document more accessible to its readers they have been provided in other languages.

The manager and staff team demonstrate a very strong commitment to delivering extraordinary childcare practice tailored to address the individual needs of each young person they look after. Young people are being enabled to make impressive progress across the many aspects of their lives, including school attendance and educational achievement, their emotional development of independence skills and by practically keeping themselves safe.

The valuable use of reflective practice assists the manager and her team develop and improve the service being provided. Significant importance is placed upon enlisting and acting upon feedback provided by the views of young people, staff and social workers. Young people are enabled to make their views known through the range of media that best suits their communication style and in the language in which they

feel most comfortable.

The ongoing detailed external and internal monitoring of the quality of care being provided is used to inform any practical changes required to ensure young people get the best possible supporting positive outcomes. The manager places appropriate emphasis on the sustained improvement of the service based on its previous performance and enhancing the progress being made by young people. The annual review of the quality of care is realistic in its aspirations and target setting.

Young people are looked after by a very competent staff team who exhibit a wide range of skills and experience. All established staff have a relevant qualification in working with young people. The team skills and abilities match the needs of young people living in the home competently. Staff display high levels of enthusiasm and find creative ways in which the diversity needs of young people and their families can be being engaged with. The staff place considerable emphasis on developing their understanding of cultural and national backgrounds to enable a practical and sensitive understanding of children from non British backgrounds. In practice such sensitivity appears to be working very well.

The manager and staff are committed to providing young people with stability, consistency and security needed to keep them safe. The staffing complement in place to accomplish this task is sufficient to meet the needs of young people in the best possible way. Staffing numbers currently provide sufficiently for the levels of support needed to promote recreational activities, visits and attending appointments.

Staff receive a comprehensive training programme that addresses the particular needs of this placement alongside the more pastoral needs of young people. Training provides staff with the statutory input, skills, qualification and knowledge to effectively do their jobs.

Staff are very well-supported by their manager. They have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and the high expectations placed on them for providing quality and informed childcare practice. Collectively staff confirm that when they need support and guidance, the manager is always responsive. Staff regularly receive one-to-one supervision and annual appraisals of their practice which informs their learning and development. Team meetings take place monthly encouraging the whole staff team to discuss the general operation of the home, how the service may be improved and to reflect on young people's progress. A recent staff review of the revised national minimum standards assisted them to evaluate how their practice could be further improved confirming their commitment.

The home's written records are securely stored and provide a comprehensive but practical picture of individual young people's needs, including diversity, development and progress. Young people's records contain up-to-date information about them, including the relevant documents from placing authorities. The manager is proactive in following up shortfalls from placing authorities.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.

