

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Lucy Ansell
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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 is a specialist home dealing with children and young people who have been severely traumatised or psychologically deprived, with disordered patterns of attachment. This home is part of a children's charity and along with its school provides a programme of care, therapeutic work and education for up to 10 children and young people, aged between five and 13 years of age.

Overall effectiveness

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

Staff succeed in providing a stable and consistent environment which enables the children to achieve excellent outcomes and contributes to personal growth which enables them to make a smoother transition to their next move. The staff understand the individual strengths and needs of the children placed. Staff focus on building emotional well-being and in helping the children develop resilience and start forming attachments. No recommendations or requirements were made at the previous inspection visit in March 2011. The home has continued to implement its own programme of improvements updating the safeguarding and missing person policies and procedures, improving monitoring and quality assurance collection and improvements with regards to the site and premises. One recommendation was made on this visit to look at reducing duplication within the placement plans.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure files are clear and up to date and are not duplicating information. (NMS 25.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Children placed here thrive in the home's supportive environment which offers consistency and boundaries so children can feel secure. The children experience individualised and group therapy, which helps them to develop a positive self view and grow in self confidence. Staff enable and support the children to sensitively work

through their experiences of past traumas so they can start to make healthy attachments, process their own feelings and relate to others around them.

Children's health needs are exceedingly well managed including emotional and psychological health needs. Staff guide the children to understand and manage their health by raising their self awareness and through the staff's commitment to the children's well-being. Children benefit from the home accessing a range of health professionals and specialist services. Staff demonstrate excellent knowledge regarding children's individual health care needs and the action that needs to be taken to address these. Individual health plans are comprehensive and robust. Discussions were seen with the children being encouraged to make informed decisions about their health around food and taking physical exercise. The children enjoy healthy nutritious meals that meet their needs. The menus offered a varied and balanced diet, with choices from other cultures available.

Children have an excellent record of attendance at school. All the children attend the home's own registered independent school for children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The children benefit from motivated and enthusiastic teachers and school support workers who work in small classes, which ensures the children are achieving and progressing in their academic studies. Key workers attend all educational meetings and are proactive in raising expectations for achievements and ensuring opportunities beyond the school day maximise their child's learning. The home has a dedicated staff member for school liaison to ensure all communications between school and the home are consistently dealt with.

The home is actively involved in the local and wider community with trips to local facilities that the children participate in. The home is also supported with fund raising by local charities and patrons of the home. A range of purposeful and enjoyable activities are available for the children to try and a holiday to the New Forest has just taken place. This is an annual event and greatly enjoyed by the children. Staff work hard to nurture and support interests and hobbies, and help them to find new activities they might enjoy which will help them develop confidence in their skills.

The home was praised by the social workers spoken to as they felt the home is excellent at providing the right support for contact. A strength is the amount of work staff do to ensure appropriate contact has been encouraged and maintained with family and friends. This includes the family being fully involved in the children's life as is appropriate for the benefit of the child.

Whilst due to the young age of the children no work for preparation into independence is completed, informally work is still being completed on successful transitions for when the child is ready to move to their next placement.

Quality of care

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

Children benefit from significant and positive relationships with staff and when

spoken to said they like all the staff but particularly their key workers. The key worker system is valued by the children and is used as one of the outlets for them to discuss their concerns. They respond to the relationships with adults that genuinely care about them and want the best for them. The ongoing support, relationships and commitment from staff to their key child helps greatly in their sense of security and in starting to form healthy bonds. The management team work hard to keep the staff team emotionally healthy so they are best placed to support the children. Good communications still exists with ex-residents and they stay in contact and come back for home events, which shows the regard held by the now young people for the staff and home.

The children are clear that their views and wishes are actively sought in daily community meetings and are taken into account and help to influence the way the house is run. Information is available in a child-friendly format on how to make a complaint. Information on how to access independent advocates and on the rights of a child are available in the updated children's guide. One young person spoken to was clear who they would speak to about any concerns; most issues are dealt with informally as they occur and are aired in the community meeting. Staff frequently hold honest discussions with the children so they fully understand why staff can not always act upon their wishes.

The children's file are comprehensive and ensure the children are cared for in line with their individual placement plans. The key worker takes responsibility for ensuring the placement is up to date and the requirements of the plan are implemented. This does not mean that other staff members are not clear on the plan and the required targets; because daily team handovers ensure all staff have high aspirations for all the children in their care to make exceptional progress. The individualised placement plan gives regard to the children expressing their individuality and clearly highlights their needs. The young people's needs relating to cultural background, identity, faith or sexual orientation are positively addressed in both care planning and supported during day-to-day practice. The files do duplicate a lot of information and a recommendation was made to look at this. The home ensures that the children have the individual support they need through the employment of daily handovers and weekly staff meetings, review meetings and key working sessions which are led or guided by qualified psychotherapists. The home produces a child-friendly placement plan which the children are fully involved in and the home has plans to support the children to take over setting their own targets.

The quality of the relationships in the home is significant to the exceptional progress and outcomes that are being achieved. Staff have a good understanding and application of therapeutic care and fully embrace the importance of individualised care plans and frameworks of attachment. The well-being of the child is at the centre of the home's practice and the children are encouraged to be fully involved in all aspects of care. The most important aspect of the home is the way childhood is celebrated and embraced, with all the little mementoes of just being a child being fully supported.

Staff promote a healthy lifestyle. The home benefits from its own cook who produces

homemade wholesome and delicious food which is greatly enjoyed by everyone. The menu supports an appreciation of different cuisines from differing cultures and there are many homemade treats produced which reduces the need for unhealthy snacks and fast food outlets. Staff have received training on medication and first aid and this ensures the health of the children. Safe practices are in place around administration of medications.

The children are well supported and supervised by all the staff when undertaking activities. Regular weekly activities include, swimming, horse riding and after school sports, street dance and dry slope skiing. There are good links with local Cubs, Brownies and football clubs. Over the weekend or during the holidays the children usually like to go on trips out to the seaside or to local parks and places of interest so they can build on their social, physical and creative skills. Good risk assessments are in place for all activities but children are also encouraged to undertake risky play as appropriate to their age and understanding.

The house is set back from the road in large grounds in a rural location. Accommodation is arranged over two floors with the offices and meeting rooms on the third floor. There are 10 children's bedrooms which are personalised to reflect their preferences, and a further two staff sleep-in rooms, one on each floor. The home is homely and has sufficient space for several lounges and playrooms to accommodate all the children. There is a sensor on all bedroom doors which is activated at night and linked to the night staff's pager. There is an alarm to the house, all gates which access the grounds are security controlled. There are two acres of land with a trampoline and a climbing frame and lots of land for playing football and riding bikes. There is also a hard play area with a big garden shed which stores all their bikes and rollerblades. The home has its own maintenance man on the staff team so he can address any issues immediately.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children stated they felt safe and observing them they trust the staff to keep them safe. Children are supported to develop a strong sense of safety and well-being but are also encouraged to take reasonable appropriate risks. There are no concerns about children being absent without authority and all staff are clear on the home's policy and procedures to follow. The home has a clear safeguarding policy and is working jointly with the local police to complete guidance on reporting unauthorised absences. Staff receive safeguarding training appropriate to their roles and responsibilities and are clear on their role in protecting the children. Any allegations are handled quickly and appropriately by designated child protection officers of the home and local authority social workers. This ensures effective protection for both staff and young people. There are very few incidents of bullying mainly verbal which are very quickly addressed by staff to ensure all children feel protected.

Staff expect good behaviour and act as positive role models to encourage

appropriate behaviour. The home supports the children to always take responsibility for their own actions, to communicate how they feel and look at any reasons why they might have acted the way they did. They do this through lots of assurance and praise for good behaviour, consistent boundaries and also by ensuring sanctions, if required, are always meaningful. There are appropriate levels of sanctions and incidents; and low levels of restraints. The log books are comprehensive and record the effectiveness of restraints and show if the children were offered medical assistance. All staff are trained in the use of physical restraint techniques but this is only used as a last resort when all other distraction techniques have not worked.

The children benefit from living in a home which provides physical safety and security. Fire safety checks are up to date. Regular fire drills are carried out which state the time it takes to evacuate the premises, and records show that all new staff and children have completed this within their induction period. Robust risk assessments are in place for the building. Electrical and gas appliances are regularly checked and maintained.

Children benefit from a stable staff team. There have been two new appointments since the last full inspection. The home can evidence a careful vetting and robust selection process being undertaken. The staff personnel files contain all the required information. The book for recording visitors to the home is well maintained and all visitors would be supervised whilst on the home's premises.

Leadership and management

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

The home's Statement of Purpose accurately reflects the services that the home is able to offer and is updated regularly to ensure all information is correct. The children's guide is appropriate and available in a child-friendly format. The children are encouraged to not only fulfil their potential but to aspire even higher; developing their self-esteem and a positive self-image.

Children receive care from a motivated, caring and supportive team. Staff are sufficient in number and experience to ensure good staffing levels at all times to meet the needs of the children. There are still a couple of vacancies but bank staff are filling these. This is a very experienced stable team who are well trained and who use their individual skills and commitment to benefit the children. Staff are enabled to be reflective, so when things are going well they can identify what their successes are and when things do not go to plan they can review their approach and act quickly to get on track. The organisation takes training seriously and has demonstrated a commitment to ensuring all staff now have a National Vocational Qualification and all mandatory training is completed as required. Regular supervision and appraisals are occurring for all staff which ensures the high quality of service and has a positive impact on the children. All staff have received appropriate training in equality and diversity.

The children and the staff team benefit from positive management and clear

leadership. The manager has the appropriate skills, experience and qualifications to provide an efficient and effective service. The staff and the children spoke highly about the senior managers and it was clear they have a strong and trusting relationship. The manager has clear and effective procedures in place for monitoring the operations within the house. The quality assurance process includes consultation with the children and other stakeholders. The home demonstrates a good capacity for continued improvement by continually working to update and improve the service provided. The home's development plan is continually evolving and both staff and management are involved in this. Two social workers spoken with agreed this was an exceptionally good service providing excellent outcomes for the children they had placed there.

All notifications or significant events relating to the protection of children are notified to the appropriate authorities and appropriate action is taken. There are regular Regulation 33 visit reports and the children are always spoken to during these visits. These reports are reflective and outcome based and help strengthen the home's quality assurance practices. Good quality records that are clear, comprehensive and up to date contribute to an understanding of the children's lives.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.