

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Angus Mackay
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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 registered to accommodate a maximum of four young people aged between 14 and 17 years. It accommodates boys only. The home is privately owned and is one of three children's homes owned by the service providers. The home provides a service to boys who may display emotional and behavioural difficulties. All young people see a therapist weekly and attend therapeutic groups as part of the homes assessment and treatment programme. Young people go to the organisations' school nearby if they are not in college or work experience.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people are achieving their educational potential and have excellent attendance at school or college. They are fully involved in the planning of their placements and are very knowledgeable about their care and treatment plans. They say that staff always listen to their views and they have a significant say in how the home functions. Young people feel safe in the home and respect staff and one another. They enjoy excellent relationships with all staff and have confidence in the management of the home. Staff recognise and address the particular care and cultural differences in the young people aiding them in forming a positive self view. They encourage young people to take responsibility for their own care, and support them in addressing all of their health needs in a way which engages them positively in decision making

Staff and young people benefit from excellent management of the home provided by the registered manager and the extended management team. Managers take account of the diversity and personal differences of the young people at every stage of the homes planning and development of systems, to ensure they meet all of the young peoples' needs. Managers have excellent processes for monitoring the service and they constantly review these to maintain an outstanding service to young people. There were no recommendations or requirements following this inspection.

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make exceptional progress in education and staff support them to attend either school or college on a full time basis; this aids academic success. Teachers give young people the opportunity to sit a wide range of GCSE subjects as well as vocational training and work experience. All young people engage in personal education plans and pathway plans to aid their futures. Young people say they are fully involved in this planning and that their views are always incorporated.

Staff work very closely with the service's therapists and external health services to ensure they address all the physical, emotional and psychological needs of the young people. Staff refer young people to other health professionals as required and they make excellent progress in all areas of their personal wellbeing. Each young person has a health plan, which records all interventions clearly and tracks progress. Staff listen to young people's opinions about treatment plans and there is evidence of changes to medication at their request. The therapist provides a high level of engagement with the young people and the staff team. This ensures continuity in the complex care and treatment programmes for each young person. Young people make exceptional progress with some very complex and often dangerous presenting problems. They achieve significant success in addressing anger, drug and solvent abuse; low self-esteem; fire setting; aggressive and sexualised behaviours and a range of other issues, including severe mental health problems. Young people learn coping mechanisms to help them manage their behaviour and they say this enables them to form new friendships and test out learnt protective skills.

Young people move into the home so they can learn a wide range of self-help skills and prepare for independence. They are encouraged to live within a budget and are all very proud of how well they manage these budgets and their personal bank accounts. Young people learn how to take on more responsibility in key-worker sessions, group meetings and on-going therapy, and staff reinforce the positives and address any negatives.

Quality of care

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

The home is a well-maintained, detached rural property. It is relatively close to towns and villages which provide work, education and entertainment opportunities for young people. They have their own bedrooms which vary greatly in size but are all well equipped. The young people like the home and have personalised their own bedrooms, which they are keen to show off. The home has a large kitchen-dining space, where staff teach self help and cookery skills. There is a pleasant lounge and a games room, as well as a hall used as an office. One social worker described it as, 'a lovely homely place with very dedicated staff who try to make it like a home not an institution, it feels like a home.'

Young people have a clear understanding of the rules of the home, personal programmes, rewards and sanctions and are able to outline them and how they work. One young person commented that it is good to have to earn everything, and another said that staff allow you to be yourself without making fun of you. All young people have incentive schemes which focus on key areas and allow them to earn extra money. Young people have very personalised programmes, which incorporate advice from therapists, education and care staff. Young people are integrally involved in this care planning process and all are aware of their plans. They say that they helped to write them, that staff listen to what they have to say and this helps them take responsibility for their own behaviour. Therapists work very closely with the young people to aid them in addressing their often complex, problems. Young people like the therapists and see them weekly on an individual basis and weekly in a group setting.

Staff and young people behave with respect to one another and expectations are high. All young people have behavioural reward programmes, which encourage a range of positive social behaviours. Staff follow plans that cover all needs on an individualised basis allowing all staff to be fully aware of cultural, religious, linguistic or other personal needs. By working on these closely with the school and the therapists, they gain a clear understanding of what lies behind the young peoples behaviour. This allows all parties to improve outcomes for young people and track progress across all parts of their independence programmes. Young people gave examples of ways in which they were able to effect change in the rules of the home. One young person said that staff always listen and they can change things, 'within reason'. Social workers say that staff prepare young people for meetings and helped them to contribute with the occasional helpful nudge. Young people say they are encouraged to learn about different cultures in the school and in the home in discussion and through events such as themed evenings. Young people describe the fun they have doing this and are planning another event.

The young people are all in full time education, either in the homes' school or in one of the local colleges. Young people are proud of their educational achievement, which includes GCSE qualifications in a wide range of subjects. All of the young people have a clear idea of career plans and believe they have done well in education. The young people had disrupted educational backgrounds and difficulties in school, such as behaviour, forming relationships, attendance and achievement prior to coming to the feeder home which has led to their current placement. They are all working towards attendance at local colleges through as carefully risk

managed process, which the social worker, therapists and care staff design to expand their boundaries whilst protecting the public. Young people attending college still go to the daily group meeting at the school to reinforce their boundaries and to keep staff fully involved with them to enhance their safety. The school makes excellent progress with the young people and aids in preparing young people for this important step in readiness for leaving the home.

Staff give young people's emotional, physical and psychological well-being high priority at all times and arrange the necessary treatment and additional services they need. Healthy eating is encouraged by staff and young people learn how to shop for a balanced diet. Pathway plans and care plans contain detailed health plans for the young people and they are fully involved in creating and monitoring these. Staff engage young people in programmes to develop their independence skills preparing them for moving on from the home. Young people say they find it difficult to contemplate leaving but that staff work hard to get them ready. Young people are very adept at budgeting and preparing menus for themselves and other young people in the home. They all have chores to complete on a daily basis, which staff vary to give them experience of all different tasks needed in independent living. Young people say they iron their own clothes, cook meals, run a budget and help clean up. They are encouraged to use free time earned through the risk assessment process in a productive way, which includes joining in local groups or clubs.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The registered manager ensures that the home is a safe environment for young people to live in. The home take fire risk exceptionally seriously and all health and safety checks are up to date and regularly monitored by the home's managers. All young people learn to appreciate the hazards of materials they use in their independence training to aid in their protection from harm. They are fully involved in maintaining the environment, which is pleasant, domestic, and appropriately tidy and clean. The home has electronic sensor pads, which alert staff and young people when anyone moves around upstairs; this enhances the safety and security of everyone. All staff are subject to a rigorous recruitment process which has been reported on in previous inspections. Due to there being no new staff, records were not viewed during this inspection.

Young people are confident about getting dedicated support from their key worker and other staff in the home if they feel in need of help, or feel unsafe. They reported no bullying at present and were clear what to do if this occurred and what support staff would offer. All young people have their own telephones, and staff monitor safe use and make sure they can ring support agencies, families, advocates or social workers on request. Safe access to the internet is carefully supervised by staff, but is regarded as essential as part of each young persons progression towards independence.

Managers monitor all incidents of restraint and of young people going missing to ensure safe practice. No young people have gone missing from this home for over three years, but staff remain aware of the procedures to follow to ensure the safety of both the young people and the community. There have been no restraints since the last inspection and staff use alternative methods of dealing with difficult situations which are more in keeping with the requirement for young people to take responsibility for their own behaviours. Safeguarding is the core of the work with young people. They are very closely supervised by staff to ensure that everyone is safe. They are subject to very detailed and comprehensive risk assessments to aid their controlled progression to independence. Social workers have expressed mixed views on this; but it is clear that the home strives to offer young people opportunities to expand their boundaries in a manner which is appropriate to their age, stage of development and crucially the risk which they pose to others. The quality of relationships and strict control of boundaries is an important element to the work with the young people in this home to enable them to engage in their treatment programmes. Young people gain tremendous insight to their presenting problems and their inner controls. The therapists produce individual programmes, which allow the young people to safely explore their background, and over time they build up a repertoire of skills and responses to keep everyone safe.

Leadership and management

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

Staff and young people enjoy excellent relationships with the managers of the home saying that they are approachable, helpful and very professional. There are a number of changes to the management structure, which senior managers are handling to ensure continuity and to minimise disruption to the young people in the home. During the inspection, the registered manager met with the young people in their weekly meeting where she discussed their recent behaviours, their current achievements and difficulties and outlined her expectations, modelling appropriate interactions to the young people. Following the last inspection, the home had no recommendations or requirements but previously the registered manager has responded promptly. Staff and young people are informed about the inspection process and all young people were keen to contribute their views. Young people are exceptionally clear about the purpose of the home and all believe that they contribute to the internal management as appropriate.

Young people receive care from an exceptionally stable, well-qualified, highly motivated and caring team. All of the young people like the staff and express the view that they care for them exceptionally well. They describe them as brilliant and helpful, non judgemental and, 'like a good family'. The registered manager ensures that staffing levels are sufficient to meet the needs of the young people and there is an appropriate mix of staff to give a wide range of role models to the young people. Staff receive regular supervision both from line managers and from the psychotherapist to ensure that their needs are being met, and they are appropriately prepared for the specialist work they undertake with the young people. This allows them to more fully understand the presenting problems of the young people and their own reactions to these.

The home provides an extensive training programme for staff, which covers all core requirements in regulations, and more specific training related to the purpose of the home. Staff say that the training is excellent and fully equips them to work with the complex care and emotional needs of the young people. All staff hold the National Vocational Qualification at level 3 and managers ensure they are up to date with professional, legal and practice developments. Young people benefit from the confidence and stability engendered in the staff team by this comprehensive support and development programme. Staff are all appropriately trained in equality and diversity and in working with young people with sexually harmful behaviour. Staff are required to challenge discrimination, bullying, victimisation or inappropriate touch immediately it occurs to provide a safe environment for young people to develop the skills and confidence to make a safe and successful transition back into the wider community. There are clear policies for staff and young people to guide these interventions and keep all parties safe.

The management team gives excellent support, clear direction and positive role modelling to staff, leading to benefits in the quality of care they provide to young people. Managers are strongly committed to providing a highly personalised service to each young person, which meets their cultural and individual needs. As part of the process of continuous improvement, managers have recently altered the format of regulation 33 reports to display more evaluative information to aid management interventions to the benefit of the whole service. The current regulation 34 reporting

process is undergoing review to enhance the quality of information gathered as part of the ongoing development plan for the home. This utilises a range of information from the service to track progress and seeks contributions from staff and young people. Staff maintain comprehensive records on young people which are securely stored in the office space. Staff ensure that records provide a clear picture of each young person, the risks they pose and how to work with them to improve consistency in approach. Social workers say that they receive monthly and sometimes weekly summaries, which provide good information on how the young people are progressing.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.