

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Michael Williams
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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 is one of two run by a limited company. It is a traditional detached cottage located on a rural hillside in an area of woodland. It provides care and accommodation for a maximum of four young people of either sex from eight years to 17-years-old and with emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Overall effectiveness

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

Overall the home provides a good service to young people. The quality of care provided is good and outcomes for young people are also good, as are the leadership and management of the home. The safety of young people and the promotion of equality and diversity are also good.

Young people accommodated commented that staff at the home 'do a lot for me and it's a good home', and that staff 'meet your needs, help you, try and understand you, and are easy to talk to and they listen'. They selected the word 'good' to describe both their overall experience of being at the home and different aspects of it. Their placing social workers commented that they 'couldn't speak highly enough' of staff at the home, and that they are 'pleased so far with the outcome of [their young person's] placement'.

Late July 2011, the Regulation 33 visitor reported that 'Progress has been made with the three young people who have been in placement for some time'. The inspector found similarly. Taking into account young people's starting point at the time of placement, there has been an increase in positive behaviour and relationships and a decrease in behaviours of concern. The home provides well-planned care for each young person, taking into account their individual needs and their wishes and feelings, and the views of those significant to them. Young people enjoy strong relationships with staff and especially their key workers. Mostly, young people at the home are safe and feel safe.

Areas for improvement are: the young people's information booklet, which does not fully describe the home's use of reparation as a disciplinary method; young people's case records, which do not always include the result of their latest review; and reporting any concerns to placing social workers as soon as possible.

Areas for improvementStatutory 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
5 (2001)	revise the children's guide to include more information about the home's use of reparation as a disciplinary measure on children accommodated (Regulation 17.(2)(g))	31/10/2011
28 (2001)	include in the case records of children accommodated the date and result of any review of the placing authority's plan for their care in a timely manner. (Regulation 28, Schedule 3)	31/10/2011

Recommendations

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

- report any concerns about the welfare or safety of a child accommodated to their placing social worker as soon as possible. (NMS 4.7)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

As appropriate to their age and understanding, young people make good progress to develop a positive self-view, emotional resilience and knowledge and understanding of their background. This is because young people receive individualised care from staff, as set out in their placement plans, which promotes all aspects of their individual identity. Young people commented that since being placed at the home they have 'built up more confidence', and that if staff do not understand something about their background 'they ask me' about it.

Young people's physical, emotional and psychological health is very well promoted and they are able to access services to meet their health needs. With their consent, staff at the home take young people to access the health services they need. The home employs a behaviour management consultant who provides weekly psychological interventions, support and training to promote young people's emotional and social development and to support staff working with them.

In relation to their starting point at the time of placement, the educational achievement of young people is good. This inspection took place during the school summer holiday, but young people commented that staff had done all that they reasonably could to make sure they regularly attended their education provision, and had supported them to get back into school following an exclusion. A placing social

worker commented that the home was providing their young person with the stability they needed to get back into education.

Young people are able to make a positive contribution to the home and the wider community by being actively and positively involved in activities in the community. This inspection took place during the school summer holiday when young people were being supported and encouraged by staff to take part in a range of activities. Some of these were part of their leisure needs identified in their placement plans, and others were summer trips. Through their education provision, some young people had developed a local group of friends and a social life outside of the home.

Appropriate forms of contact are promoted and facilitated for each young person so that they have constructive contact with significant people in their lives. Staff at the home support and encourage young people's contact arrangements with family, friends and significant others in line with their individual placement plans. During this inspection, staff were supporting young people's contact with significant friends and working with placing social workers to build bridges between young people and their parents.

Young people receive care which helps them to prepare for and supports them into adulthood. One young person commented that their level of maturity and independence exceeded that typical for their age. Their placing social worker confirmed this. As a result, staff at the home have adapted accordingly and supported the young person to continue to develop practical and financial skills and to take responsibility for their personal healthcare.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy strong relationships with staff. They mostly interact positively with staff and each other, and mostly behave appropriately. Shortly before this inspection, the Regulation 33 visitor reported 'The staff team and young people appeared to share mutual respect for each other and the banter was light hearted and cheerful'. The inspector found similarly. Rewards and disciplinary methods are included in the young people's information booklet and are fair and individualised and mostly clear. The financial reward system used with young people in the home is effective. A preliminary psychological assessment and then a therapeutic behaviour support plan are completed by the home's behaviour management consultant for each young person who has agreed to work with them, and this plan is consistently implemented by staff and regularly reviewed.

The views and wishes of young people and where appropriate others with an important relationship with them, such as their parents and social worker, have significantly influenced the running of the home and the delivery of care. For example, one young person was supported to participate, along with their social worker and their parent, in their last review meeting at the home. Young people's views were sought and acted upon in the recent refurbishment of the home.

Since the last inspection, the home has received two complaints from people local to the home. As far as possible, both were resolved at the informal stage. Young people, and their parents and social workers, know how to take up issues appropriately and to complain.

Young people are cared for in line with their individual placement plans, which are monitored by their key worker at the home and regularly reviewed. However, the results of reviews are not always recorded in case records in a timely way. Young people commented positively about their key workers and the breaks away from the home that they have had with them, after things have gone wrong for them at the home.

The home has good links with health agencies, including specialist services where appropriate and as a result young people are either receiving or waiting to receive the services they need to meet their health needs. A social worker commented that they wanted to place their young person at the home because of the psychological and therapeutic support offered by the visiting behaviour management consultant and the on-site staff team. All permanent and relief staff at the home have a first aid qualification.

Staff successfully engage and work with schools, other education settings and the placing local authority to support young people's education. This means that when young people have experienced problems in school they receive appropriate support. This can include specialist tuition in the home and support at a pupil referral unit. The outcome of this work is leading to reintegration back into formal education.

Equality and diversity issues with young people in the home are very well addressed in both daily living and care planning. A social worker commented that their young person's cultural background was discussed at their placement planning meeting and that staff at the home are very aware of it and work very individually with the young person.

The home provides a good quality physical environment for young people. This inspection took place towards the end of refurbishment and re-decoration of the home that the Registered Manager requested due to the damage caused to the home by a young person previously in placement.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people mostly feel safe and are safe. They understand how to protect themselves and are protected from significant harm. Since the last inspection, as required the home has notified Ofsted about a number of serious incidents that have necessitated calling the police to the home. The number of these incidents has significantly decreased since the home ended the placement of the young person primarily involved in them. Staff and young people at the home are now being

supported to work through the after-effects of these incidents. Two recent incidents that raised concerns about the welfare and safety of a young person at the home were not reported to their placing social worker until the young person's review took place, over a week after the first incident.

Since the last inspection, three young people have gone missing from the home a total of nine times. On each occasion they have been protected by staff following the company's missing person procedure. The company is due to update this procedure once they have received approval from the police regarding a protocol for missing children that they have recently discussed with them.

Young people are safeguarded by the management of their behaviour at the home, which focuses on supporting their positive behaviour rather than using disciplinary methods or restraint in response to their inappropriate behaviour. Restraint is seldom used; its use is in line with company policy and government guidance and is recorded both in the home's restraint record and the young person's case record. Young people commented that there are instances of verbal and physical bullying at the home as a result of difficulties between them. However, they added that staff deal well with this bullying 'most of the time' and 'do try and stop it', for example, by staff talking to both young people involved 'to get everything sorted'. At the time of this inspection, the young people at the home had not been in placement together very long and the home's behaviour management consultant commented that dynamics between them were 'starting to settle down'.

There is very careful selection and vetting of all staff working with young people in the home, including all residential and relief residential support workers (RSWs). Staff do not start work at the home until all the recruitment checks required are completed. This helps to prevent unsuitable people from having the opportunity to harm the young people.

Arrangements for the protection of children are good. A recently recruited relief RSW had completed the Local Safeguarding Children Board e-learning course, and the rest of the staff team were up to date with this training.

Young people live in a safe home. For example, checks on its gas and electrical installations and its health and safety and fire risk assessments have all been recently completed and an external company carries out an annual health and safety inspection.

Leadership and management

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

The Registered Manager of the home has the appropriate skills, experience and qualifications to exercise effective leadership of the home's staff and operation and to deliver good quality, individualised childcare. A placing social worker commented that the Registered Manager 'is brilliant and on the ball with knowing what's happening with [their young person]'.

The aims and objectives of the home and what services and facilities it provides are stated in its up-to-date Statement of Purpose and young people's information booklet. The latter, under the heading 'disciplinary methods', states: 'If you cause damage to the property or to another young person's belongings then you will be expected to reimburse the cost of the damage out of your pocket money.' However, the home had used reparation with one young person out of another of their personal allowances as well.

The quality of the provision at the home is regularly monitored, both externally by the Regulation 33 visitor and internally by the Registered Manager, to continually improve it for young people. Monitoring arrangements ensure that young people's views about the quality of care are obtained and acted upon.

The company has a current business development plan with its overall aims and objectives and specific sections on its financial accounts and the home.

The needs of the young people at the home are very well met by staff who are sufficient in number, qualifications and experience, and who are very well trained and supported. Staff regularly meet for team and psychology meetings and regularly receive formal supervision. The home was in the process of recruiting a RSW to address an identified shortfall in the staffing level and gender mix.

Young people's case records are clear, mostly up-to-date and stored securely, and contribute to an understanding of the young person's life. However, one young person's case record did not include the result of the most recent review of their placement at the home. The Registered Manager had a record of this meeting, but had not transferred it to the young person's case record and the official record of the meeting had not been received.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.