

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Bill Drumm
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home provides care and accommodation for up to three young people of either gender on a medium- to long-term basis. The home is run by a local authority that provides services to support young people with emotional and behavioural problems.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements

Adequate: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Overall effectiveness

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

The home provides a very warm, supportive and nurturing environment in which young people can grow and feel safe. There are some good examples of personalised, individual care being delivered to young people who have experienced some very difficult emotional times and family trauma. The nurturing environment allows young people to enjoy being children and to develop acceptable behaviour with clear boundaries from excellent role models.

One young person's social worker said, 'the progress my young person has made since living at the home has been extensive.' Young people have developed from their starting points. They have a safe and secure home where they can feel cared for and loved. This helps them to develop emotionally and improves their relationships with adults and family members.

Young people are very happy living at the home. One young person said, 'I really enjoy living here, it's the best place, much better than the last home I was in.'

Each young person has a placement plan that highlights the specific objectives of their placement. However, placement plans are not tailored to the individual level of understanding of each young person. This means that some young people may not know what the overall aim of the placement is meant to achieve.

All young people receive education by going to school, college or via home tuition. Formal education is given a very high priority and strategies are in place to ensure each young person attends regularly. Young people who receive home tuition receive

intense support and encouragement to reintegrate them into more formal education provision. Young people are supported to understand the importance of a good education and to achieve their maximum potential. One young person's social worker said, 'the school were on the verge of excluding my young person due to their very difficult and challenging behaviour. Staff at the home supported the school by having daily communication and working with them on strategies to manage behaviour.'

The relationship between young people and staff was observed to be loving, warm and positive. Young people spoke very fondly of staff.

Feedback from staff, responsible social workers and other professionals involved with the home is extremely positive. The home is comfortable and well maintained throughout. The atmosphere created by the staff and young people is informal, friendly and very cheerful. Staff have a genuine affection for the young people and are fully committed to ensuring they achieve their maximum potential. One young person's social worker said, 'staff have worked hard to build positive relationships with the young people they care for.' Young people know that staff, genuinely care about them.

Staff work hard to ensure that all young people are kept safe and free from harm. Young people are encouraged to manage their own behaviour and to understand the consequences of their actions on others. Restraint or holding of young people takes place infrequently and only in exceptional circumstances. Written records of the use of restraint are retained. However, written records do not fully comply with national minimum standards. On occasions, sanctions are also used to help young people modify their behaviour. Written records are in place to show what sanctions have been applied and for what specific reason. This helps young people to understand the consequences of their behaviour and the impact it may have on others.

The home is very well managed and the staff team is fully committed to meeting the diverse needs of young people. One member of staff spoken to said, 'I can't imagine working anywhere else, I even come in on my days off. I love it here.' In addition, one young person's social worker said, 'the home has a warm, calm atmosphere and staff treat young people with respect. I think the greatest strength of this home is the quality of the staff.'

Independent visits help to ensure the home is run properly. The independent visitor speaks in confidence with young people and staff. However, they do not speak in confidence with the family members of young people, to ensure that their opinions are borne in mind.

There are some further areas for improvement. These largely relate to the records of admissions to and discharges from the home, as well as the home's Statement of Purpose.

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
29 (2001)	maintain in the children's home the records specified in Schedule 4 with particular reference to those relating to young people (Regulation 29 (1), Schedule 4 (1))	31/01/2013
33 (2001)	interview, with their consent and in private, such of the children accommodated there, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home as appears necessary in order to form an opinion of the standard of care provided in the home. (Regulation 33 (4)(a))	31/01/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure that each young person understands, within their level of understanding, the purpose and content of their placement plan (NMS 25.1)
- review the home's restraint records to ensure that they fully comply with national minimum standards (NMS 3.17)
- review the home's Statement of Purpose to ensure it fully complies with national minimum standards, and fully describes the experience of staff members. (NMS 13.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people who become ill are attended to promptly and efficiently. One young person's social worker said, 'the home understand his needs very well, I have no concerns about his well-being.'

Young people do not actively and regularly participate in smoking or drinking alcohol. They enjoy a very good healthy and nutritious diet. One young person said, 'I really like the food here.' Another young person said, 'the food is always great here and we sometimes join in and help if we want to.' Young people enjoy very good health.

Young people benefit from a proactive and committed approach to supporting and encouraging them to engage in education and, where possible, to have good attendance at school or college. Staff have very high aspirations for the young

people in their care. Young people who receive home tuition receive consistent and effective support to understand the importance of a good, formal education. All academic, sporting and leisure achievements, no matter how small, are celebrated. This helps young people to achieve their maximum potential and to develop confidence and self-esteem.

Young people at the home generally get on well together. Occasional arguments do happen but, staff are quick to minimise the impact of these. One young person's social worker said, 'the children at the home are allowed to be just that, children. They learn how to get on with each other. Staff provide a nurturing environment with clear and consistent boundaries. Their handling of all young people is exceptional.'

Within the limits of their age and understanding, young people are encouraged to get involved in jobs around the home. One staff member said, 'they're encouraged to keep their own rooms clean and tidy, some are better at it than others.' This helps young people to learn new skills, to be more independent and to take care of their home.

Young people can talk with staff, which helps them to make sense of their background and to understand why they have to live in the home. One young person said, 'the staff in here are the best thing that has ever happened to me, they're fantastic.'

Family contact is actively encouraged and supported. One young person who completed a questionnaire said, 'you were great with me and my family. You helped us loads and helped with our relationship.' One young person's social worker said, 'the home has been brilliant. The turnaround with my young person has been phenomenal. The manager and staff work tirelessly to support relationships between young people and their families.'

Quality of care

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

One young person's social worker said, 'this is a great home. The staff have created a warm loving environment for young people to grow up in.' Another young person's social worker said, 'staff show they really care and are not afraid to give a child a hug when they need one.' This supportive and nurturing environment allows young people to develop physically and emotionally.

Staff set clear, consistent boundaries for young people. Their approach is firm and fair, whilst adopting a relaxed manner. All young people have had their needs assessed before moving into the home and each young person has a placement plan in place. However, the home does not have placement plans that are specific to each young person's level of understanding. This means that young people may not know what a placement at the home is specifically meant to achieve. One young person's social worker said, 'I can't fault the day-to-day care my young person receives. The

home has ensured he has a bright future now, which is more than could be said when he first went there.'

Key workers have formal and informal meetings with young people to discuss the care they receive. This enables staff to evaluate the care they provide and to ensure that young people are happy. One young person's social worker said, 'the key workers show a high level of commitment and offer a high level of support, help and advice.'

The results of all statutory reviews are available in the home. The care provided to young people is adapted to ensure the care provided meets their changing needs. Young people's files are detailed and well ordered. Written information retained within the home provides an extensive record of each young person's life there, as well as the help and support carried out by staff. Within the limits of their age and ability, young people are involved in the running of the home. Regular, formal young people's meetings are held during which young people are asked specifically for their opinions. In addition, mealtimes provide young people with the opportunity to discuss issues within the home and to voice any concerns they may have. Young people know that their opinions are listened to.

The home has a culture of promoting each young person's life experiences and in ensuring they are able to participate in a wide range of activities. Activities which young people are involved in include cooking and baking, supporting Remembrance Day by selling poppies, walks across local moorland and attending the Army Cadets. This helps young people to develop their confidence and self-esteem.

All admissions to the home are carefully planned and where possible, take place at the young person's pace. This process helps to overcome any anxieties the young person may have and ensures that the home can meet their needs. Members of staff are fully committed to ensuring each young person enjoys a positive experience while living at the home and is able to develop both physically and emotionally. A staff member at the home said, 'the young people come here with all sorts of problems. We just try to give them some security and let them know that we do actually care about them and what they do.' This helps young people to progress and develop from their starting points.

Young people enjoy living in a residential area. Each young person has their own bedroom. Bedrooms are individually decorated in a style of each young person's own choosing. This helps young people to feel safe at home. Young people have access to computer gaming equipment, a range of books, board games and toys. There is also a television in the lounge where young people can relax. The home has a dining area where members of staff and young people can socialise and enjoy a meal together. The home provides a very comfortable environment for young people to enjoy.

Young people are encouraged to enjoy a healthy lifestyle. Individual dietary needs are catered for and members of staff have undergone training in safe food hygiene. Each young person has written consent forms in place in order for members of staff

to administer medication or first aid where this is necessary.

Staff work closely with health care professionals in ensuring that the health care needs of young people are regularly monitored. They are highly committed to ensuring that young people attend all health care appointments and that they access all the services to which they are entitled in order to promote both their physical and emotional well-being. Staff are dedicated in encouraging and supporting young people to understand why smoking and alcohol is bad for their health. This helps to ensure the welfare of young people is actively promoted and safeguarded.

Young people enjoy being cared for by friendly, warm and supportive staff. One young person's social worker said, 'the staff have time for the young people, they show attention and always listen to what they have to say.' Members of staff actively strive to provide an environment in which young people are nurtured, where they can develop at their own pace, be happy and flourish. Young people spoken to said, 'this is a great place to live' and, 'I like the staff here.'

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say they feel safe at the home. There have been several occasions since the last inspection when a young person has been missing from the home. However, the home's manager and staff have made the safety of young people a top priority. Their dedication in reducing the number of instances when young people go missing has proved to be highly successful. The pattern of young people being missing from the home has shown a marked improvement. One young person's social worker said, 'staff have worked tirelessly and really hard to ensure the safety of all the young people. I have complete trust in them to do the right thing. I'm comfortable with their decision-making.'

Staff, deal with any incidents of alleged bullying quickly and efficiently. Bullying is not tolerated at the home. The manager and all members of staff are trained in safeguarding and receive regular refresher training to keep their skills and knowledge up to date. This helps to ensure they are both confident and competent in dealing with any safeguarding issues should these arise.

Young people are encouraged to take responsibility for managing their own behaviour and to understand how it affects others. Young people who moderate their behaviour receive warm praise and where appropriate, reward. One young person's social worker said, 'my young person is the first to apologise when he's made the wrong decision and is able to see where he went wrong.' Sanctions are seldom, if ever used. Staff, prefer to adopt more innovative approaches to managing negative behaviour and work consistently as a team to provide clear boundaries for young people. Young people are helped to understand the consequences of their behaviour.

The restraint, or holding of young people, rarely happens and only takes place as an

absolute last resort. There have been two incidents where restraint has been used since the last full inspection. All incidents where restraint has been used are formally recorded and closely monitored by the home's manager. However, the home's written records of the use of restraint do not fully comply with national minimum standards.

One young person's social worker said, 'the staff team as a whole consistently applied my young person's behaviour management plan. The outcome is that they've not been restrained once and they've learned new skills in attracting positive attention.' This means that young people develop socially acceptable behaviour.

Regular checks of the home's fire systems, smoke detectors and emergency lighting are carried out by the home's manager. Young people take part in fire drills and the times at which fire drills take place are fully recorded.

Young people live in a safe environment because the home has a thorough and systematic approach to risk management. Risk assessments are clear, focused and regularly reviewed. Regular checks of gas installations and electrical equipment also take place.

The home has a motivated, vibrant and stable staff team. There have been no new appointments at the home for several years. Young people are looked after by an organised, dedicated and committed staff. Young people are fully protected from potential abuse and visitors to the home are asked to identify themselves on arrival and to sign the visitors' book.

Leadership and management

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

The home's manager and staff were described by one young person as, 'the best thing that has ever happened to me.' They went on to say, 'I'm so grateful for everything, I'm so glad I came to this home and met such great and wonderful people.' The home's manager provides efficient, effective and competent leadership. Staff are enthusiastic, versatile and fully motivated. The home meets the aims and objectives set out in its Statement of Purpose and provides clear information about the skills and qualifications of the staff team. However, the Statement of Purpose does not fully clarify the experience of staff members.

The home's manager and senior staff provide regular supervision and daily support to the staff team. This helps staff members to develop their skills, feel fully supported in their work and ensures young people receive consistent care from a well-supported staff team. Members of staff understand each young person's individual strengths and needs. Working practices are consistent in enabling young people to thrive, develop both physically and emotionally, increase their self-esteem and help them to achieve their maximum potential.

Young people live in a home that is very well managed. The home's manager

provides effective management and has systems in place to ensure that the quality of care is regularly monitored. Problem areas which may be identified are quickly highlighted and swift action is taken. Written records relating to the admission and discharge of young people at the home do not fully record the address where young people are admitted from or discharged to. This means that an accurate record of the life of young people at the home is not therefore maintained. One young person's social worker said, 'they're never problem-focused here, they're always so positive.' The manager has written a development plan for the home. The manager and staff know what the strengths and weaknesses of the home are and what improvements they wish to make.

Regulation 33 visits take place and Ofsted is provided with written reports in a timely manner. The reports are informative and give a general overview of how the home is performing between inspection visits. There are discussions with young people and staff. However, discussions do not take place between the independent visitor and the relatives or family members of young people. This means that their views about how the home is run or how the young people are looked after do not take place. Their opinions and suggestions for improvement do not currently form part of this process.

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* and the evaluation schedule for children's homes.