

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Caroline Brailsford
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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 set within a 14 acre site which contains a small working farm also owned by the company. The home provides care and accommodation for up to five young people with learning difficulties.

Overall effectiveness

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

The home provides a good level of individual care for a group of vulnerable young people with complex needs. Outcomes are at the forefront of plans that are made. The manager and staff work tirelessly to promote the social and emotional development of the young people, ensuring that they make progress in the placement.

Young people's views about the running of the home and about their own lives are central to their care. Young people as a matter of course, actively participate in the running of their home and in the management of their care. They have excellent relationships with staff. This enables them to work together to provide a quality of care which is thorough, resulting in good outcomes for the young people.

Young people are well protected and robust systems are in place which means safeguarding young people is central to all areas of practice. Behaviour that is more difficult to manage is dealt with effectively, and positive behaviour management is consistently applied. As a result, young people experience a consistency of care which enables them to feel as settled as possible and further enables progress.

Each young person is viewed very positively for their differing personalities and attributes. Staff value and respect young people's diverse backgrounds and reasons for their placements.

At this inspection two recommendations are made to further improve outcomes for young people. These are in relation to risk assessments for young people who may become missing and a written development plan for the home.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- Ensure that the registered person has a written development plan (NMS 15.2)

- ensure that the staff at the home implement their own policies in relation to children going missing, this is in particular relation to risk assessments (NMS 5.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people develop and progress well and the care provided to them is of a good quality. Staff are very aware of individuals' needs and know the young people exceptionally well. Staff treat young people with respect and work effectively to support them with their complex needs.

Young people lead a healthy lifestyle because staff help them to be aware of their own personal issues and needs. Young people make good progress with healthy eating and personal hygiene. They enjoy and choose their own food and participate in cooking, shopping and preparation. This helps them to develop skills that they will need in adulthood. Young people also have some experience of developing other independence skills. They are encouraged to participate in washing their own clothes and keeping their bedrooms clean. This also prepares them for the transition to more independent living.

Young people experience varied activities within the home and the community. They are seen by the staff as very individual and therefore they have opportunities to experience new experiences according to their own needs. Where some young people are more difficult to engage, staff continue to encourage them in activities and in the community to increase their independence and confidence.

Young people in this home can have very complex emotional needs, but staff are very good at understanding when they are unhappy; because of this, young people receive a high quality support and plenty of opportunities to express their views. For example, in the many one-to-one support sessions that take place.

Young people feel confident that the staff and the manager take their views seriously and know how to use the complaints system. Their individual needs are taken into consideration well by staff and specific tools have been developed so that young people have a variety of methods of getting their views, wishes and feelings across. Young people particularly like the 'worry tree' where they can post any concerns they have. This is then checked once a day by the manager and a very prompt response written and sent back to the young person. This is an important tool in the home because young people may not be ready to verbally discuss their issue and may find it easier to write it down. This helps to make sure that the young people all have plenty of support with their individual issues and ensures that their concerns are consistently addressed.

Young people are very well supported in maintaining family contacts. Staff work closely with social workers regarding the young person's own views about what they

would like to happen. One social worker said 'Staff are incredibly supportive to young people in this area'. Staff also represent young people's views well and a good level of support ensures that young people understand the reasons for any restrictions in contact arrangements. Because staff know the young people well, they can make links between the difficulties that young people face with their contacts and their emotional well-being. This ensures that young people feel able to talk about issues that they have.

Consistent efforts are made by the manager and staff ensuring young people's regular school attendance, and for ensuring that staff and schools communicate well. One social worker commented how impressed they were with how the staff had supported a young person in a recent personal education planning meeting. Where some young people have struggled with their placements, staff have offered to go into school with them to support them there. This further helps to promote progress.

Emotional and psychological support is pursued, if required. This ensures young people's emotional and physical needs are met. Although care planning, risk assessments and health plans provide the level of detail required overall, there are times where documentation in this area seems over complicated. As a result of this there is a potential risk of staff overlooking key information; however, to date this has not had an impact on the young people and staff are very knowledgeable about young people's needs.

Quality of care

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

The home is warm, homely and very suitable to meet the needs of the young people. Staff only enter young people's bedrooms if there is a matter of safety which needs addressing. This ensures the privacy and the dignity of the young person.

Young people have exceptionally good relationships with staff. One social worker reported 'jovial but professional relationships between staff and young people', showing that young people can still have fun but are clear about the boundaries for behaviour. Another social worker commented that staff have a 'lovely relationship' with the young person that they have placed at the home.

Staff are very committed to meeting the needs of this vulnerable group of young people. Their strong team working ensures consistency in their care. This further ensures that young people know what is expected of them. Staff consistently try to understand the reasons for more complex behaviour. Team work, planning and risk assessments ensure that much thought goes into how to support young people with the issues and difficulties they face. Staff are very creative and use different opportunities to support young people, which are both formal and informal for example during activities and in one-to-one sessions. There are some highly detailed one-to-one sessions addressing personal issues. These are vital to the positive development of young people's emotional well-being. The manager and staff always have the best interests of the young people at heart, making the young people feel

cared for.

The manager and staff work very hard in explaining to individual young people why decisions have to be made even if they disapprove. This plays a large part in how well young people progress because they quickly learn to trust staff who are very honest with them.

Young people respond well to the excellent support from staff. This encourages an atmosphere of positive behaviour and creates a more stable environment for the young people. Where physical intervention is used, young people are very confident that staff only intervene if there is a risk to theirs or another person's safety. Social workers are particularly happy with the positive way in which staff manage behaviour. Young people who have experienced breakdowns in previous placements are being consistently supported by the staff team. As a result, staffs' positive and consistent approach ensures that the young people are provided with stability in their placement.

All staff have a very clear insight into the needs of the young people in their care. Staff empower young people to express their own views, wishes and feelings about their care and what is happening in their own lives. The manager is also particularly good at engaging with the young people and ensures that they all have opportunities to have a say in all issues which concern them. One Social worker said 'The staff really do advocate for the young people'.

Staff are consistent in challenging barriers to education. They are committed to ensuring that they find ways of engaging young people with their education, leisure and community involvement. Where young people find it hard to engage in these activities, staff continue to find new ways to involve them.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say that they feel safe during their time in this home. Robust policies and procedures are in place so that staff understand what they need to do to ensure that young people remain safe. Detailed work takes place in line with risk assessments and care plans to further promote their safety and welfare. Where a safety issue takes place, there is lots of evidence of individual support and guidance to try to reduce the risks.

Young people do go missing from the home but staff make extensive efforts to minimise this. Inventive plans are developed and a high level of one-to-one work minimises incidents of young people going missing. In relation to going missing, young people feel that staff supervision is good. One young person said 'Staff are always keeping an eye on us'. Staff know the young people well so can easily identify the triggers for individual's going missing. This means that they can therefore intervene to stop it from happening. As a result, the numbers of young people going missing from the home has reduced. However, there is a potential risk

to young people when they do become missing as action taken by staff does not always reflect the detail in the risk assessments.

Risk assessments for young people are generally detailed and identify triggers of behaviour and detail of diffusion techniques that help minimise risks. These documents are updated regularly in response to specific incidents in the home, and include issues regarding health, welfare, behaviour and potential bullying issues. Bullying is addressed in a professional manner and young people know that such behaviours will not be tolerated. This leads to young people living in a safe and none threatening environment.

Positive behaviour is encouraged and staff are extremely aware that the use of restraint is a last resort. All staff are trained, confident and competent in techniques of restraint. They are all committed to the use of diffusion in line with individual needs. Following any episodes of restraint there are clear and well documented records. One young person said that they think that behaviour management is 'Fair' Therefore, young people who display challenging behaviour, know that staff will manage this behaviour well and protect them.

Recruitment procedures are robust and as a result, the Registered Manager ensures that all staff are safe to work with the young people. Any allegations of harm are dealt with speedily and the manager has developed good links with the safeguarding team. The home's safeguarding policy and training delivered, ensures that staff are very clear about what they must do if there are concerns of a safeguarding nature.

Leadership and management

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

The home is well managed and the Registered Manager offers very clear direction to the staff. One social worker said 'I cannot speak highly enough of the manager and staff'. The manager has a high level of understanding of the needs of the young people in the home and balances the management of paperwork with her own involvement with the young people. One young person said 'The manager is fantastic and is always there for you if you need her'. The manager is confident that she really does know what is happening in the home and that the young people's needs are being well met. Young people also enjoy personal one-to-one time with her and say that this helps them to be well supported.

The manager has very clear plans for the development of the home and her enthusiasm clearly impacts positively on the running of the home. Although the manager has a very clear picture of the development of the home, she has not yet recorded her development plans to evidence this fully. The Registered Manager's monitoring procedures ensure that records are scrutinised and that staffs' practice is closely monitored. The manager therefore has a clear insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the home.

Staffing in the home is stable and the manager is effective in ensuring young people

are cared for by staff that they know. One young person said 'I prefer some staff to others'. Another young person said 'Staff are brilliant. Staff feel well supported and part of a well established and strong team. They commented that the camaraderie in the team is 'absolutely fantastic' showing their commitment to providing good outcomes for young people in their care.

The manager has taken action to make sure that recommendations made at the last inspection have been met. This ensures that young people are well cared for and remain safe.

The Statement of Purpose clearly demonstrates the care that the home provides. The Registered Manager has knowledge of new developments to legislation and inspection and the requirements of her role.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.