

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Graham Robinson
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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 service provides activity-based intervention for young people who are experiencing a period of difficulty or crisis. Up to three individual placements for young people of either gender are provided. Placements are usually short term and are activity based.

A planned yet flexible programme designed to meet a young person's individual needs and circumstances is agreed with placing authorities. Young people are cared for at various locations around the United Kingdom in accommodation that includes bunkhouses, youth hostels, campsites, canal boats and an ocean-going yacht.

Overall effectiveness

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

Once settled into their placement, young people usually make good progress in relation to their starting points both socially and educationally. They benefit from having time away from a lifestyle that for many has been chaotic and at times full of risk. They are introduced to a nurturing, supportive environment that is underpinned with clear and consistent boundaries. Individual needs are well identified with plans and strategies in place to address them.

Young people are cared for by a staff team, who work positively and energetically to meet their needs in a non-punitive way. Flexible care packages delivered by a stable and relatively experienced staff team provide young people with a sense of security and a sense of direction. Young people's welfare is promoted as a result of the safe working practices.

Good management, supported by consistent and effective levels of internal monitoring have assisted in the service progressing since the previous inspection. The strengths and weaknesses of the service are assessed and there are suitable plans for continued development.

Staff and young people enjoy good relationships with each other which enhance and underpin the progress being made by young people.

The external monitoring of the home has again failed to meet the regulatory requirements regarding the frequency of monitoring visits taking place. The young person's guide requires updating as it does not contain all the necessary information required, following the introduction of the revised children's homes standards.

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
33 (2001)	ensure the external monitoring of the service takes place consistently, within the required timescale. (Regulation 33)	31/12/2011

Recommendations

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

- update and revise the young person's written guide to include the contact details for the Children's Rights Director and a young person's independent reviewing officer as well as updating the contact details for Ofsted. (NMS 13.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are achieving positive outcomes in all respects. They receive high levels of support which allow them to prosper socially, educationally and in individual personal areas. The ethos and working practices of the service means staff work positively with young people, supporting and aiding them to achieve their personal goals and targets. Young people are given time away from the pressures being experienced prior to admission and in many cases, are re-introduced to their childhood. Their individual needs are identified and these are reflected in their plans and strategies.

Young people benefit from regular contact with family, friends and other appropriate adults, although for some, contact arrangements can be restricted for their own safety. Parents and social workers report the quality of care is good and young people's needs are well met. In addition good levels of communication between parties ensure young people benefit from a co-ordinated approach to their care.

Young people have achieved good educational outcomes based on their starting points, although this can be dependent on the time a young person remains with the service. All young people have flexible education packages designed to meet their current and future needs. This ranges from regular attendance at a school operated by the company, to tutors visiting the places where young people reside. Young people are given every encouragement and support to re-connect and engage positively with their education.

Young people enjoy good health and their health needs are positively promoted. Good health planning, underpinned by specific health plans, ensures individual needs are assessed and met. Young people are encouraged and supported towards a healthy lifestyle through diet and exercise; this impacts positively on their general health. All young people are registered with community-based health services to access day-to-day health support. Where necessary, young people receive specialist interventions to support their emotional and complex needs.

The mobility of the service using a variety of bases for accommodation is well established, with young people actively encouraged to take full advantage of the range of community based resources available. Individual activity planners produced weekly allow young people to enjoy appropriate leisure activities. This provides them with a greater sense of perspective and appreciation of what is available to them within the community.

Quality of care

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

Staff have the ability to form positive relationships quickly which encourages young people to settle and develop trust. Signs and symptoms of frustration or distress in young people are quickly recognised by staff, enabling them to manage situations quickly and sensitively before they escalate. A range of agreed, planned strategies are used by staff to support young people positively, rather than resorting to sanctions. This means the numbers of incidents linked to behaviour management are minimal, resulting in less stressful experiences for young people.

Levels of communication between staff and young people are good which allows for the views, wishes and feelings of young people to be accounted for when future plans are being formulated. Young people confirm they continually discuss their day-to-day choices with staff which supports them to make appropriate decisions.

Young people and their families are aware of how to make a complaint and are provided with appropriate information. The young person's guide, while informative, does not contain the contact details of a young person's independent reviewing officer or details for the Children's Rights Director. In addition the details for Ofsted are in need of review.

Young people benefit and thrive in a supportive and nurturing environment that removes the pressures experienced from their previous lifestyle. Good planning documentation clearly identifies individual needs, including cultural, religious, language, dietary & racial needs. Regular review and update of plans ensure young people's needs are current and well met.

Young people benefit from strong relationships with staff and they all genuinely enjoy each other's company. Staff work openly, transparently and communicate positively with young people. As a result, young people enjoy a relaxing environment and receive care in a trusting atmosphere where they engage with adults in a

positive way.

All accommodation in use is risk assessed and is designed to meet the individual needs of young people. Most of the accommodation in use is used regularly, although new accommodation is introduced and utilised at certain times. Wherever young people are located, there is opportunity for privacy. Photographs accumulated and kept by young people reflect their positive experiences.

Staff promote healthy lifestyles in a variety of ways. Young people actively engage in a wide range of activities, individual interests and leisure pursuits which introduces them to new experiences. For example, one young person has developed a real passion for fishing, while at the same time, giving up smoking. Young people's diet not only reflects their current tastes but encourages them to eat healthily. They are encouraged to try unfamiliar foods, appreciate different cultures and try international cuisine. Individual cultural and medical dietary needs are fully met.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are cared for safely and feel safe. Systems are in place to ensure that should safeguarding issues arise, prompt referral is made to external agencies. This ensures young people are appropriately protected. The service has established links with local safeguarding agencies and retains the safeguarding procedures for the various placing authorities. This results in young people's welfare and safety being promoted positively. All staff have undertaken initial safeguarding training and refresher training forms part of the core staff training programme. Overall safeguarding awareness and practice, coupled with a multi-agency approach keeps young people safe.

Young people live in single occupancy accommodation and say that bullying is not an issue of concern to them. However, staff are alert to young people's specific needs and monitor them closely to minimise incidents.

Staffing numbers working directly with young people are based on risk and a young person's individual need. As a result, serious management behavioural incidents are rare. This shows in the low number of missing from home and additional measures and incidents of physical intervention taking place, reflecting the stability of young people's placements.

Young people are supported through upsets, challenges and frustration, with staff able to work positively to diffuse most difficult situations without the use of physical intervention. However, good internal monitoring of incidents ensures young people's individual strategies are kept under review and adapted. As a result, serious incidents are rare.

The staff team is stable with no new staff recruited since the previous inspection. Appropriate recruitment policies, procedures and practice are in place, with any new

staff being suitably cleared prior to taking up their posts. This ensures only suitably checked people have contact with young people.

Young people are protected with a range of risk assessments which are reviewed regularly and updated if necessary. Young people are familiarised with the fire procedures for the various locations they stay at. Where appropriate, safety checks to maintain a safe environment are regularly undertaken. Each young person has their own individual risk assessment, coupled with coping strategies. This assists in providing and promoting a safe environment for all young people. Individual strategies are updated in light of reviews of young people's risks and progress. Young people confirm they feel safe at all times.

Leadership and management

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

The service is well organised and managed. The manager receives good support from the staff team and her manager. She is enthusiastic, child focused and has a clear vision of how the service should develop and progress. The staff team, who work flexibly, are child centred and supportive of the ethos, aims and working practices developed by the service. They understand their role and responsibilities and work with the support of the management team to address young people's needs.

Staff receive regular supervision and appraisal to improve their knowledge and working practices. Allied to this, staff meetings are taking place with more regularity and consistency than previously noted. Staff have opportunities to attend core training events to update their knowledge and skills and are doing so with greater frequency. This ensures they possess the competences and skills to effectively meet young people's diverse needs. This whole area has improved significantly since the previous inspection.

The internal monitoring of the service is taking place regularly, meeting with regulatory requirement. Monitoring reports are comprehensive and ensure practice is accountable. Reports appropriately review performance and identify areas for improvements. Young people contribute to monitoring and can discuss their views.

The manager is well supported and demonstrates an understanding of the strengths of the service and areas in need of improvement. Following recommendations carried over from the previous inspection, improvements have been made in the following areas. All staff have now completed positive intervention training, risk assessments identifying hazards are being reviewed regularly and where necessary, updated, the formal supervision programme for staff is being implemented with greater consistency and all staff are now working towards gaining an appropriate professional qualification.

However, a requirement made at the previous inspection is repeated. This is due to a lack of consistency in the frequency of external monitoring visits taking place.

This is an unusual service to manage due to its flexibility and the extent of its operation geographically. The manager and core of the staff team have worked together for nearly two years and continue to review and revise working practices. The ethos, aims and working practices of the service provide young people with highly personalised care that meets their specific needs and circumstances. They live in environments that allow them respite from previous difficulties and space to consider their future plans.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.