

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 is run by the local authority and provides care and accommodation for up to six boys or girls. The home is registered to care for young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties.

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 warm, supportive environment in which young people can grow and feel safe. Young people who live at the home are happy and well cared for with some having lived there for a number of years. There are some good examples of personalised, individual care being delivered to young people who have experienced some difficult emotional times. The supportive environment allows young people to mature and to develop socially acceptable behaviour. Young people have developed from their starting points, especially with regard to their emotional well-being and, in some cases, relationships with family members. One young person's social worker said, 'I find the staff at the home use a very child centred approach, they know the young people and can tune into their needs well'.

Education and training is given an extremely high priority. The home has a designated member of staff, who is responsible for liaising with all education and training providers to ensure that discrimination is actively challenged, and that young people are provided with the best possible opportunities. Young people are fully supported to attend regularly and to understand the importance of a good education. This helps them to achieve their maximum potential.

The relationship between young people and staff was observed to be relaxed, very friendly, warm and positive. Young people spoke fondly of staff, were able to share good humour with them and were at ease in their presence. Staff work hard to ensure that all young people are kept safe and free from harm. The dangers of substance misuse and of being missing from the home are discussed with young people individually, and in young people's meetings.

Feedback from staff and responsible social workers is very positive. The home is comfortable and well maintained throughout. The atmosphere created by the staff and young people is informal, friendly and cheerful. Staff have aspirations for the young people in their care and are fully committed to ensuring they achieve their maximum potential. Young people know that staff genuinely care about them.

Two requirements have been raised, to ensure the detail in the Statement of Purpose is in line with regulations and to ensure staff recruitment is more robust. Also there are shortfalls in the formal recording of any restraints that may have been carried out and in relation to the plans for young people to move on from the home into independent living.

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
4 (2001)	review the home's Statement of Purpose to ensure it consists of all the matters listed in Schedule 1 (Regulation 4(1), Schedule 1 (26))	31/12/2012
26 (2001)	ensure that full and satisfactory information in respect of all people employed to work at the home has been obtained in relation to the matters specified in paragraphs 1 and 2 of Schedule 2. (Regulation 26 (6)(b), (Schedule 2))	31/12/2012

Recommendations

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

- liaise with each young person's social worker and independent reviewing officer where applicable, about the progress of the young person's readiness to move to any future accommodation where they would expect to take on greater responsibility and personal independence (NMS 12.3)
- review the home's restraint records to ensure that they fully comply with national minimum standards, especially in relation to young people having an opportunity to discuss any incidents of restraint. NMS 3.17)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people living at the home consistently learn new things and experience new activities. Young people are fully involved in making decisions about the redecoration of the home and in deciding what activities are undertaken. This helps them to grow in confidence and improves their self-esteem. Each young person has a key-worker. Young people benefit from regular meetings with their key-workers, as these forums help young people to achieve their agreed goals and to develop new ones. One young person's social worker said, 'young people are always given the opportunity to express their own individual views.' One young person said, 'I can talk to anyone they listen to me and I know they want what's best for me.'

Young people consistently develop their levels of independence and learn new skills associated with daily living. Several young people at the home are nearing the time when they will have to leave the home and move into independent living. One young person said, 'I'm excited about moving on but scared at the same time. I don't think I have a pathway plan.' Another young person said, 'I don't know what's happening. I know I have to leave soon but I don't know yet where I'll be going. These gaps within the pathway planning process, mean that some young people are unsure of their futures and they may suffer unnecessary anxiety.'

Young people are all registered with local primary health care providers, and any young people who are ill or suffer accidents are quickly attended to. Young people are encouraged to take regular exercise and are supported to use a range of community facilities and resources. One member of staff said, 'we had an obstacle race in the garden a few weeks ago, everyone was involved and they thoroughly enjoyed it.' Young people are actively discouraged from smoking and substance misuse. Young people who are engaged in these activities are referred promptly to the relevant agencies and their attendance is actively supported and encouraged. Young people are therefore able to understand the importance of staying healthy and in taking regular exercise.

Young people take up regular opportunities to take part in meal preparation and to prepare their own snacks. In addition, the home has a structured programme in place, which helps young people to learn the skills associated with daily living. Young people are supported to develop a positive self-image and to be aware of their own personal hygiene needs. Members of staff adopt a sensitive approach to this and support young people to be as independent as possible. This helps to prepare young people for their transition into adulthood.

The education and training of young people living at the home is fully supported. The home has a designated worker who is responsible for liaising directly with all education and training providers. This helps to ensure any difficulties are dealt with promptly, a young person's placement is not jeopardised and attendance is good. Regular attendance at school, college or training provides young people with the opportunity to learn new things and to achieve their full potential. One young person's social worker said, 'in my opinion this is exemplary practice.'

Quality of care

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

The home provides a supportive environment in which young people can develop both physically and emotionally. The placements of all young people are underpinned by individual assessments of need and care plans. The home's manager takes great care in ensuring that the home can meet the assessed needs of young people prior to their admission. This helps to ensure that the placements of young people are appropriate and have the greatest chance of success. In addition, the home has developed individual care plans for each young person. The care plans are well organised and thorough. Members of staff understand the needs of young people and work hard to ensure they are met.

Regular monitoring and review of the care provided to young people takes place. One young person's social worker said, 'staff are present at all meetings and reviews and put forward their views with the young people.' Written records of all statutory reviews undertaken are available within the home. This enables staff to evaluate the care they provide and ensures the changing needs of young people are met in a prompt and timely fashion.

Written information retained within the home provides a clear record of each young person's life there as well as the help and support carried out by staff. Young people are involved in the running of the home and have been fully involved in all aspects of the home's current refurbishment. One young person said, 'we have regular meetings about the things we want to do. We were also involved in what colours the rooms would be painted it's nice to have your say in things.' Within the home there is a culture of promoting each young person's rights and in ensuring they are able to participate in a wide range of activities. One example of this being, the annual clean up and litter picking on the beach. This helps young people to take an active role in their local community and to develop their confidence and self-esteem.

The home has a detailed admissions process for young people. Where possible, they are encouraged to visit the home prior to admission, to stay for meals and to join in activities. One young person spoken to said, 'I wanted to live here, I thought it would be fun.' All members of staff are committed to ensuring each young person has a positive experience while living at the home and are able to develop both physically and emotionally. The admissions process to the home helps young people to overcome any anxieties they may have and ensures the home can meet their needs.

Young people enjoy living in a rural area close to the seaside. Each young person has their own bedroom and all bedrooms have recently been redecorated. Young people were fully involved in choosing the colours they wanted for their bedroom walls. In addition, they are actively encouraged to make their rooms as comfortable and personal as possible. There is a television in the lounge where young people can relax. The home also has a dining area where members of staff and young people can socialise and enjoy meals together. In all, the home provides a comfortable and

pleasant environment for young people to enjoy.

The individual dietary needs of young people 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. Members of staff have also had training in the safe handling and administration of medication. Young people are encouraged to enjoy a healthy lifestyle and their welfare is safeguarded.

Relationships between members of staff and young people were observed to be warm and friendly. Members of staff have high aspirations for the young people living at the home and they actively strive to provide an environment in which young people can be happy and flourish. Young people spoken to said, 'the home's good.' Young people, make good progress and appear happy living at the home.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people said they felt safe and looked after. The home's manager and staff have systems in place within the home to safeguard young people and are fully trained in safeguarding. Regular refresher training is available which helps to keep staff's skills and knowledge up to date. Staff are confident and competent in dealing with any safeguarding issues as they arise.

There have been several occasions since the last inspection when a young person has been missing from the home. These occurrences are slowly reducing over time. One young person's social worker said, 'staff contact me in a timely manner if they have any concerns about the welfare of my young person.' Written records show that young people are responded to positively on their return. Young people are regularly reminded of the risks they take by going missing and staff actively encourage them to change their behaviour.

One young person's social worker said, 'I have observed staff praise young people and encourage positive behaviours. Young people are supported to take responsibility for their actions.' Sanctions are not used as a means of promoting positive behaviour. Young people have written agreements in place whereby they have agreed to act in a responsible manner if staff, treat them as young adults. One young person said, 'it's good that we don't get fined bits of our pocket money for swearing and other things. We're expected to think about our actions and when we've calmed down we're encouraged to apologise if we've done anything wrong; that's how it should be.' The restraint or holding of young people has not happened in the home for some time. Written records of the use of restraint do not, however, include comments from the young person, following the incident.

Regular checks of the home's fire systems, smoke detectors and emergency lighting are carried out by the home's manager and staff. Young people take part in fire drills and the time 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.

Young people benefit from being looked after by an experienced, trained staff team. There have been two new appointments since the last inspection. The home operates a thorough, detailed and robust recruitment policy, which includes the involvement of young people. While, these procedures generally keep young people safe, the vetting information had small gaps in identity checks and not all references are verified with the authors. Visitors to the home are asked to identify themselves on arrival and to sign the visitors' book, which means unchecked adults are escorted around the home.

Leadership and management

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

Staff receive consistent, competent and effective leadership from an experienced and professional manager. One member of staff said, 'I think the support is excellent, nothing's too much trouble and her door is always open.' Staff are well motivated to create new opportunities for the young people living at the home. Another member of staff said, 'we're encouraged to think up new ways of doing things to help the young people make progress.' The home meets the aims and objectives set out in its Statement of Purpose, and the young people's guide provides clear information about the home and what it's like to live there.

Staff at the home, receive regular support, supervision and appraisal from the home's manager. Members of staff know what is expected of them and are supported in their work. Regular team meetings are held during which the needs of each young person are discussed. Staff, understand each young person's strengths and weaknesses and agree as a group on the best strategies to manage individual behaviours. This helps to promote consistent working practices and enables young people to develop emotionally and physically.

Regular meetings are held with young people individually and in house meetings. Young people are encouraged to voice their opinions about how the home is run. This helps young people to have some control over their lives and helps build their self-esteem.

The organisation demonstrates a commitment to training all staff and in ensuring their training is kept up to date. This helps to ensure staff members retain the skills and competencies they have and are encouraged to develop new ones.

Young people live in a home that is effectively 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. 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.

Monitoring visits from someone independent of the home take place every month. The person undertaking these visits talks, where possible, to young people, staff and, where possible, the parents or relatives of young people living at the home. These visits help to ensure that the home is run properly and that young people are well cared for.

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.