

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Carole Moore
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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 privately owned home offers services and care for up to four children and young people from 11 to 17 years of age. The young people present emotional and behavioural difficulties due to trauma they have experienced in the past.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people benefit from outstanding levels of support, encouragement and praise. Staff provide a nurturing and homely environment in which young people develop and thrive. Young people's views are taken into account in the running of the home and there are many opportunities to integrate with community events and activities. There are sound relationships between staff and young people. The support provided contributes effectively to increase confidence and self-esteem; young people are happy and proud of their achievements. Young people enjoy the wide range of activities available to them and support in pursuing personal interests. They recognise that house rules are in place to protect them and keep them safe.

Staff are trained and supported in their roles and their enthusiasm is evident. Robust monitoring systems provide the Registered Manager with information to continually develop and improve the care provided and the outcomes for young people. One recommendation has been made in relation to regular supervision for new staff.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure new members of staff have regular supervision by appropriately qualified and experienced staff. (NMS 19.4.)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people flourish and make significant progress in most aspects of their lives. The staff team have high expectations and provide encouragement, incentives and celebrate any progress. Consequently, young people respond well and develop a

positive view of themselves and their achievements. Link workers support young people in understanding their family and cultural background with life story work, photographs and sometimes specific therapeutic input. The staff team fully understand young people's personal histories which enables excellent tailored responses to individual young people. This helps young people in making sense of their past, to enable them to think about their current placement and their future plans.

There is a thorough approach to promoting the physical, emotional, and psychological health of young people and they are cared for in a warm, caring, nurturing environment with firm and consistent boundaries. Young people are in good health because staff ensure that all health needs are properly assessed and visits with the doctor, dentist and optician are well planned and take place. Young people are fit and well and enjoy participating in a variety of activities. Young people eat well and enjoy their food. Young people are actively encouraged to get involved with cooking and help cook meals with staff support, supervision and guidance. Young people say they like the food and have access to lots of fresh fruit for snacks. Young people are currently in good health and do not require any medication.

Young people attend school and are making good overall progress in relation to their starting points when they first moved in to the home. Young people know and understand that they can talk to staff if they have a difficult day at their educational placement. Staff have excellent links with the schools and work in partnership; this helps young people to meet their educational targets. Young people are making a positive contribution to their home and the wider community. Young people are encouraged to help keep their home clean and tidy which helps develop key skills related to cooperation and responsibility. For example, young people help to prepare and cook their meals and they receive lots of praise and encouragement for their efforts. In addition, young people are encouraged to pursue their interests.

Young people are able to demonstrate a clear understanding of the contact arrangements in place for family and friends. Staff work closely with families in line with placement plans, likewise, any restrictions are clearly noted. Young people speak positively of the support they are given by staff to ensure that contact goes ahead, for example, staff facilitate all transport arrangements. This ensures that young people are provided with the support to establish positive relationships with significant people in their lives. Young people receive excellent support to develop independence skills to equip them for later adult life. Within the home young people are expected to do tasks to contribute to the running of the house as well as the added bonus of earning extra pocket money for specific tasks.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from a competent and proactive staff team who are able to meet their needs and support them throughout their placement. Relationships between staff and young people are friendly, positive and good natured. Young

people are encouraged to express their feelings and emotions without infringing the rights of others. Staff are consistent and effective with teaching young people models of good behaviour, such as courtesy and respect, which promotes personal, social and emotional development. Equally, staff help young people when inappropriate behaviours occur to understand the outcome of their action.

Young people feel that their views, wishes and feelings are actively sought and that they can influence the running of the home. Young people participate in weekly house meetings and link worker sessions and are able to plan what meals they would like to eat and what activities they want to do. Staff welcome constructive suggestions and young people's participation is good because they are confident in expressing their views. In addition, all young people have regular meetings with their link worker to discuss their recent progress, success, problems and concerns. Staff are exceptionally good with helping young people to understand why it may not be possible in all cases to act upon their wishes.

Young people understand how to make a complaint because making a complaint is made as easy as possible; complaints are rarely made. Young people said, 'If we are unhappy about anything we talk to staff.' Young people report physical interventions are only for valid reasons and sanctions are understood and fairly applied. Young people all feel equally treated. Young people are encouraged to learn more positive ways to express their feelings. As a result physical interventions significantly reduce once young people settle.

Young people are cared for in line with their individual placement plan and these plans are comprehensive and well detailed. These plans include any additional services and support that arise out of a young person's disability, ethnicity, race, sexuality, faith or belief. There are clear targets set to assist with their personal, social and academic achievements. There is good support for young people in attending their review meetings where they are encouraged to express their views and share their achievements. Weekly summaries are shared with the social workers and explain how effective support and guidance has been delivered. Social workers said, 'Communication with the home is excellent. We are always updated on the young person's progress.'

Young people are registered with local doctors, opticians and dentists to ensure ready access to prompt, local health care. Young people are encouraged to take appropriate responsibility for their own health needs and they are taught how to make informed decisions about their lifestyle. Staff are actively involved in engaging with young people about a range of health-related issues, which results in consistent improvements to health and fitness. There are good systems in place to ensure that any medicines are kept and administered safely.

There is a designated member of staff who addresses the young people's educational needs. She has a good relationship with the Looked After Children's Educational Resource team and with the local schools. She also implements educational programmes for those young people who are not in mainstream school. Staff are proactive and consistent in supporting the educational achievement of young people,

and records of all their achievements are celebrated and communicated to others working with young people to ensure they receive positive recognition. The manager says that the home advocates very strongly for young people to ensure that the school understands all the issues affecting them. Staff have achieved exceptionally good outcomes for young people through effective communication and advocacy. One young person who had not previously attended school, now attends full time and enjoys their time in school.

A range of purposeful and enjoyable activities are available relating to the young person's cultural background and personal identity. Young people are encouraged to pursue their interest and hobbies such as, football, dance, ice skating and gymnastics.. This is encouraging young people to take responsibility for their physical health and fitness. At a practical level, the home has a range of computer games and console equipment, access to a television and board games.

The accommodation provides a pleasant, warm and comfortable home that young people enjoy living in. It is a converted farm house in a rural community, within reasonable travelling distance from educational, leisure and health facilities. Furnishings and décor are of a high standard and there is an ongoing development plan for further improvements. Young people's bedrooms are personalised to their own taste and requests for any changes to the accommodation are dealt with promptly. There is a large garden surrounding the property with ample opportunity for outside activities and there is a separate education room at the side of the property.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people report that they feel safe at the home. They may not always like the house rules and staff supervision, but they generally acknowledge they are in place for their safety. Young people say, 'I feel safe because staff are always there for you.' Young people can have free time as they get older and display sensible behaviour. Each young person has a risk assessment where vulnerabilities are identified, with measures in place to reduce known risks and promote their safety. Staff receive regular training in safeguarding, senior staff at an advanced level. As a result, they demonstrate a sound understanding of the action to take should they have any concerns about a young person's safety or well-being.

The home has positive relationships with the local police. A jointly agreed protocol about young people who go missing has always worked well. Going missing is not an issue for any of the young people currently in the home. The home has experience of dealing highly effectively with young people routinely returning late. Staff work creatively with educating young people about the risks around running away and their level of vulnerability. This indicates the level of excellent quality day-to-day care, support and guidance that staff provide to meet the needs of young people.

Behaviour is managed very well, reward systems are in place and young people are encouraged and supported to respond positively. Excellent detailed behaviour action plans are in place providing staff with guidance on managing difficult situations. Minimal sanctions are used and physical interventions are only ever used as a last resort when all other diffusion techniques have failed and young people are at risk. If this occurs the Registered Manager spends time with the staff involved, looking at the situation to see if the incident could have been handled in a different way. Time is also spent with the young person involved to ensure that they have the opportunity to discuss their views and feelings. This excellent practice ensures that positive behaviour is promoted and restraint is only used in strict accordance with the legislative framework.

Complaints against staff are dealt with promptly and transparently. Young people are kept fully informed and appropriate action is taken. There are effective systems for determining the suitability of new staff. The manager takes responsibility for recruitment, interviewing and final selection. Very careful attention is paid to getting the right person to further enhance the diverse and strong staff team. This helps ensure that unsuitable people are prevented from working at the home.

The environment is physically safe and appropriately secure, taking account of the needs and characteristics of the young people cared for. There is a rigorous approach to health and safety matters. This is underpinned by policies, procedures and training that alerts staff to their roles and levels of responsibility. As a result, young people benefit from a safe environment and this has a positive impact upon their welfare.

Leadership and management

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

An excellent Statement of Purpose outlines the aims and objectives of the service. The home is operating in line with this statement and the principles are understood by interested parties, including young people. Young people's information is relevant, child centred and they have participated in developing this. Young people benefit from an enthusiastic and committed staff team who focus on their needs and welfare. There has been a change in the senior management of the home and some new members of staff have joined the team but they are all working to the same outstanding principles and practice as set down by management.

Staff feel very well supported, supervised and involved in making decisions. Staff report career development and training opportunities are available and varied. The manager and staff team are very well qualified and sufficient in number to meet the needs of young people. Regular meetings, supervisions and appraisals ensure practice improves further and the focus remains on young people's needs and development. One shortfall in providing adequate supervision for a relatively new member of staff was identified. Staff are challenging young people to think about differences in broader terms than race or religion, for example differences in clothing styles, beliefs, amounts of possessions and understanding family backgrounds.

Exceptional levels of monitoring young people's care and experiences ensures practice is safe and the quality of care remains consistently high. Independent visits contribute further to reflective practice and driving improvement. Young people are consistently consulted about their care and therefore settle in the home and are clear about their overall plans. There were no requirements or recommendations made at the last inspection, quality of care remains consistently high resulting in just one recommendations during this visit.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.