

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Angus Mackay
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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 registered to accommodate and care for three young people of either gender aged between eight and 17 years on admission. The home provides medium to long-term residential care to young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Emergency placements can be facilitated dependant on the stability and mix of the young people in residence at the time. The home encourages young people to attend school but can provide home tuition from qualified teachers. Work with young people is advised by a psychotherapist who also provides support to the staff team. At the time of this inspection three young people were living in the home.

Overall effectiveness

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

Staff provide exceptionally good care to young people in their care. Young people benefit from a stable well trained and highly committed staff team dedicated to providing them with a nurturing environment in which to flourish. Key workers engage young people in the care planning process seeking to incorporate their views where possible. Choice is encouraged in young people and they are actively involved in aspects of the management of the home. Key working sessions are thorough frequent and encourage young people to strive to improve in all aspects of their lives. Staff address issues of identity, culture and of diversity with young people on an individual and in groups to encourage positive inclusive attitudes.

Health care is all encompassing and young people are encouraged to take responsibility for their personal improvement. Where appropriate or needed, staff provide young people with access to physical, emotional or psychological health care. Young people are actively involved in creating the menu and in preparing meals, which the homes nutritionist approves. Young people are proud of the improvement in their health and the good lessons learnt about diet and exercise.

Young people all attend education and make good progress in line with their ability. Positive engagement in the local community is actively encouraged by staff and young people are successful either in following personal interests or in some cases in helping others through their efforts.

Managers provide outstanding leadership to the home using information positively to improve outcomes for young people. Staff are appropriately supported to provide an excellent service to young people. Managers respond to complaints and representations speedily and effectively ensuring a safe environment for young people. Social workers, young people and staff have the utmost faith in the managers and their responsiveness to requests for assistance.

Children generally feel safe in the home and all enjoy living there. Bullying is addressed robustly both when it happens and subsequently through key worker sessions. Young people show evidence of improvement in behaviour including a reduction in absconding whilst in the home. Most feedback from social workers was very positive although one had a negative experience reducing their previous high opinion of the service. The inspection led to one requirement linked to young people's safety and a recommendation about staff training.

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
15 (2001)	ensure that children accommodated in the home are provided at all reasonable times with access to a telephone on which to make and receive telephone calls in private, without reference to persons working in the home.(Regulation 15(4)(a))	02/09/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure that all staff have attained a minimum level 3 qualification or are working towards the Children & Young People's Workforce Diploma within six months of confirmation of employment. (NMS 18.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people enjoy living in the home and comment very favourably on the staff and managers. The staff provide a nurturing environment, using a therapeutic intervention based on an attachment theory model which is psychoanalytical in approach. In this structured environment young people are provided with a safe place to explore their emotional background. Managers say they use elements of cognitive behaviour modification to provide the structure for children to work with the care staff. Key workers use information from reviews, young persons' weekly meeting, and key worker sessions to construct a weekly planner, with the young person, to provide a structured agreement for the young person's immediate care. Key workers use the 24-hour plan in conjunction with the placement and health plans, which provide measured outcomes to allow young people and staff to track their progress. All young people have made progress in settling and in addressing significant behavioural problems.

The home works closely with other professionals including children and adolescent mental health service, looked after children nurse and a psychotherapist to ensure they address all the physical, emotional and psychological health needs of the young people. The psychotherapist has developed very detailed interventions for staff aimed at addressing the emotional wellbeing and presenting problems of the young people. The psychotherapist provides advice to the staff team about working with young people on both a practical and personal level to enable staff to perform purposefully with the young people. Young people have further assistance from the children and adolescent mental health service if required to aid them in addressing any difficulties they may experience. One social worker commented that the home is very good at addressing health issues and in championing positive change for the young people. The social worker commented that they are also very good at ensuring regular health checks occur to the obvious benefit of the young people.

The home has a strong commitment to education and all young people are currently receiving a full time education service. The home runs an in house education service, which staff refer to, as either the school or as home tuition. Teachers say that young people engaged in education are making good progress in line with their level of ability. Young people are encouraged to attend outside schools and college and have made very good progress there. Care staff support young people in education as required and are involved in providing additional input to the on site education facility to aid young people in engaging appropriately or in working outside the classroom.

Staff are creative in their attempts to inspire the young people to engage in the broader community. Currently the deputy manager is encouraging young people to take part in a range of positive community based activities to benefit both them and the community. The deputy manager is maintaining a resource of activities, to provide choice for the young people. This has led to an enthusiastic and creative series of events to raise funds for the local youth club and this has provided a wide range of learning experiences to the benefit of both the club and those involved. This in turn has led to the creation of a website for the youth club showing great skill and a highly developed sense of community responsibility

Quality of care

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

The home is close to the town centre in a small seaside town adjacent to transport routes enabling young people to keep in touch with friends and families. The young people's bedrooms are spacious and they are encouraged by key workers to personalise them to enhance their sense of ownership of this space. There is a small games room and adequately sized lounge and dining areas for the young people to use. Private space is limited in the home and young people say key worker sessions often take place outside the home. The kitchen is small but adequate for the number of young people living there. Young people are enthusiastic about cooking and often cook for themselves or for all in the home helping to develop their independence skills. They choose what food to buy and are involved in planning of meals, subject to approval from the home's nutritionist. Acts of hospitality are encouraged by staff as part of the young people's development and during the inspection young people offered to make drinks and meals for all including the inspector.

Staff work exceptionally hard to engage young people in healthy lifestyles. Each week, in the young people's meeting, health issues form an important part of the agenda to encourage healthy eating and living for them. The home's no smoking policy is gone through in a manner, which looks for understanding and engagement of the young people rather than as a rule and is currently successful in helping them to avoid smoking. Young people select the menu for the coming week from a range of choices, which they can vary or change completely to meet their personal, cultural or religious requirements. All menus are subject to check by the home's nutritionist, who ensures the home provides a healthy balanced diet for young people to access. Staff cater for special diets and young people make considerable progress in achieving healthy eating patterns and in maintaining them. Young people assist in shopping for food and learn good food choices to aid in their personal development. Understanding of other cultures is encouraged through themed evenings where they will look at the language, food, currency, predominant religion and other aspects of an individual country. Young people enjoy preparing and eating food from the selected country whilst building a broader understanding of other cultures. Staff provide a very robust health care programme for young people. Managers endeavour to plan admissions allowing them to identify health needs and address them from the point of admission, to ensure the safety of the young person. The registered manager ensures that staff are given the requisite knowledge and practical skills to provide the health care of each young person. This has on occasions led to additional training in very specific areas to enable them to care for the young person. Medication is securely stored, appropriately recorded, issued and checked to enhance the care provision for young people. Key workers maintain health action plans for young people and a health action sheet to aid young people's needs being met.

Social workers commented on the positive influence key workers have on the young people in their care. The home seeks to provide greater continuity in the young people's care by providing them with two key workers. Other staff not involved in key working are very knowledgeable about the young people and will provide key worker sessions if young people request them aiding their sense of safety and wellbeing. A social worker says that staff are very proactive and will chase them for missing information, or to arrange meetings to enhance the care planning for the young

person. Key workers are highly committed to the care of the young people and remain working with them throughout their placement, to provide continuity of care and to reinforce this commitment as part of the therapeutic input. Key workers engage young people in care and placement planning seeking to empower them and involve them in life choices. Placement plans show signatures of young people with comments where they choose to give them evidencing their engagement in the planning. An audit of a care process showed a flow from key worker sessions through placement plan into the Looked After Children review resulting in a graduated change for a young person in line with their wishes for increased independence. Key work sessions are very regular and cover all aspects of the young persons life for example one key worker covered issues of racism, bullying, sleep patterns, family contact and personal safety with one young person in a short period. Key workers produce weekly reports for social workers, teachers and parents to enable them to remain in touch with the young person's progress. The managers also use these progress reports in the monthly and quarterly reviews of the service to track change and ensure resources are being used to the ultimate benefit of the young people. Key workers also maintain young people's 24 hour plans which they contribute to giving advice on practical care issues such as how they like to be woken to minimise disruption and increase engagement for them. Key workers incorporate information from young people into their placement plans, which have measurable outcomes constructed from this to track their progress and ensure their plans are meeting their needs.

Staff actively support young people in engaging in clubs and events locally, which develop their sense of community engagement whilst also meeting their own personal needs or preferences. Staff assist young people, to facilitate these activities happening and young people are very enthusiastic about their attendance there. The young people have gained in self-respect, health and in developing friendships locally through these activities. Young people are encouraged to take part in school activities, which has occurred, to great effect for those involved developing their planning and organisational skills.

Staff provide a very robust health care programme for young people. Managers endeavour to plan admissions allowing them to identify health needs and address them from the point of admission, to ensure the safety of the young person. The registered manager ensures that staff are given the requisite knowledge and practical skills to provide the health care of each young person. This has on occasions led to additional training in very specific areas to enable them to care for the young person. Medication is securely stored, appropriately recorded issued and checked to enhance the care provision for young people. Key workers maintain health action plans for young people and use these to ensure that they can meet all young people's health needs and that all appointments are planned and they help young people to attend them. Key workers maintain the health care plan on young people to enable them to track the young person's progress in addressing any health issues. The home provides a comprehensive health planning system, which covers every aspect of the young person's personal care, ensuring staff can address even the most rudimentary aspects appropriately. These plans are helpful to staff and

young people and link clearly into the overall planning process for young people to aid tracking of progress.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children are clear that they have dedicated support from their key workers and from other staff in the home if they feel unsafe. Young people generally feel safe and regard most staff as helpful when they have difficulties. They are clear about the supports in place to safeguard them and to address bullying. The young people have confidence in the managers of the home and enjoy being there. Key workers have addressed all recorded instances of bullying with the perpetrators and have provided the young people with guidance to aid them in feeling safe. There is however no telephone access for young people to use without requesting it from staff except where they have their own telephones. Whilst there is evidence of the young people having exceptionally regular contact with families, social workers and advocates the home does not address the issue of affording all young people access to a telephone without recourse to staff, as required in regulations. All staff undertake safeguarding training and managers regularly address safeguarding issues in team meetings and supervision to enhance staff understanding and to improve the safety of young people. Staff are knowledgeable about the homes procedures and about how to apply this knowledge to ensure early intervention with young people showing signs of possible abuse. Exceptionally detailed records, including guidance from a psychotherapist, enhance the staff's knowledge of trigger points and presenting signs of a variety of behaviours in young people allowing early intervention of appropriate support.

Staff expect young people to behave with respect to one another and towards them as part of their behaviour management programme. Staff address respect issues with young people in a range of forums and use it as a vehicle to reinforce their strong commitment to equality and diversity. Young people are encouraged to behave in pro-social ways through a mix of behaviour modification and a nurturing therapeutic approach. Staff do not react to young people's behaviours in isolation working closely with the psychotherapist to gain a clear understanding of what lies behind these behaviours to allow them to successfully address them to the benefit of the young people. The managers analyse all incidents providing key workers with graphs of incidents, restraints and young people going missing over several months to use positively with young people to show their improvement and link it to events in their lives. The use of restraint is minimal, properly recorded and interventions comply with national guidelines. Young people are proud of their success in reducing incidents of restraint or a young person going missing and these are at a very low level with most of the young people having gone missing since the last inspection. One social worker expressed disappointment in an incident involving the young person she is working with and the subsequent follow up from the home, which has led to a reduction in her previously very positive view of the homes safeguarding of young people.

The registered manager ensures that the home is a safe environment for young people to live in. Health and safety checks are up to date and are regularly monitored by the monthly regulation 33 visitor, the quality assurance officer and by the managers in their checks to give the safety of children the highest importance. Staff ensure that repairs are carried out speedily and that where possible young people are engaged in the care of their environment to develop their sense of belonging. Young people are involved in staff recruitment and both the home and

they gain immensely from this process. Young people confirm that they feel their views contribute equally to the selection of new staff and managers say that they enhance the selection of appropriate staff. All staff are subject to a rigorous recruitment process which is properly recorded and complies with guidance to keep young people safe.

Leadership and management

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

Social workers involved with the home say that the managers are very helpful, responsive and personally provide reports of a high standard. Following the last inspection there were no recommendations or requirements but previously the registered manager has responded to these promptly.

The Statement of Purpose is comprehensive, subject to regular review and accurately reflects the service provided to young people. Young people receive a guide which some of the current residents have helped to construct, positively engaging them in the management of the home. The young people's guide is easy to understand colourful, accessible to the young people and contains helpful information with contact numbers including Ofsted. Young people confirm that they have gone through this with their key workers to ensure they have a clear understanding of the home and the services it offers. Young people are exceptionally clear about what to expect from the home, which enabled them to participate very positively in the inspection process. Questions raised by the young people to the inspector were all relevant and demonstrate their understanding of the nature and objectives of the home.

Young people receive care from a well-qualified, highly motivated, caring and stable staff team, which significantly improves the service provided to them. A social worker of one young person commented on the stability in the staff team and that the young person is benefitting from the continuity of care this provides. The registered manager ensures that staffing levels are sufficient to meet the needs of all of the young people, increasing numbers where necessary to meet individual needs. Staff partake in a comprehensive training programme to ensure that they have the knowledge to complement their experience and to enhance the service they provide to young people. Staff confirm that the training prepares them for the task of looking after young people with differing and often complex needs and that their managers enhance this with regular high quality supervision. Staff receive regular supervision and are subject to annual appraisal to ensure they continue to provide high quality care to the young people. Staff are encouraged to use supervision to address all issues of concern as well as to aid their professional aptitudes aiding their work. Staff confirm that managers do listen and do act upon concerns they have to the improvement of the delivery of care to young people. Young people benefit from the development of the staff group and from the stability engendered in the team from these supports. The registered manager is aware that all staff are now required to be working towards the level 3 Children & Young Peoples Workforce Diploma within six months of confirmation of employment although not all are yet, this has led to a recommendation. The registered manager is communicating changes in legislation to the staff team and copies of the new national minimum standards were on display in the office to aid them in meeting children's needs in line with national expectations.

Managers are strongly committed to providing a service, which meets the cultural and individual personal needs of every young person accommodated. Staff are all appropriately trained in equality and diversity and are required to challenge discrimination, bullying or victimisation immediately if it occurs to provide a safe and nurturing environment for young people. The Statement of Purpose clearly outlines the young people for whom they provide a service and through it, the management

give a strong commitment to meeting their needs. Managers will make adjustments to the staff team and to their training if they identify deficits in meeting the individual needs of young people.

Young people enjoy a service led by highly committed and skilled managers. The young people express confidence in the managers and say that they provide a safe environment for them and they can talk to them about any problems they have. The management team give clear direction to staff and the care they provide to young people benefits from this. Managers make excellent use of information gained from a wide range of monitors and from regulation 33 and regulation 34 inspections, to inform their development of the care service. Managers incorporate the views and opinions of staff and young people into the innovative quality assurance processes the home operates to capture this information. There is a clear information flow from the young people to the management meeting, this is analysed and reflected in monthly and quarterly reports. Staff maintain the extensive records held on young people meticulously and these are subject to, an external quality assurance process to ensure accuracy and to diligent monitoring by the registered manager to check young people are being cared for appropriately. Feedback from schools and social workers engaged with the home is generally very positive particularly in relation to information received from the deputy manager or registered manager to aid their monitoring of the placement. There have been occasions where workers in the home have not been so prompt or accurate with information supplied and a social worker says they have relied on the managers to rectify this. The information held on young people is securely stored in the office and young people can view this with their key workers to engage them more fully in their own care planning. Young people demonstrate an exceptionally well-developed understanding of their rights, what information is held on them and of plans for them, evidencing the positive key working and social work engagement with them.

The home is located in small congested, largely residential, street that has other businesses on it providing a relatively normal living environment for young people. Key workers actively encourage young people to attend local schools but those who cannot currently receive education in house, to ensure continuity in education for them. The home is planning to move the school, following a planning meeting with a local council on 23 June 2011, to enhance the educational opportunities for young people. The managing director plans to provide opportunities for local residents to meet with managers to enhance relationships with the local community. The home is actively involved with the broader community and staff seek opportunities to involve young people in supporting community activities.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.