

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Sharron Escott
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Date of last inspection	14/03/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is owned by a private organisation and is registered to provide care for up to four young women with emotional or behavioural difficulties.

The home operates a smallholding with vegetable and fruit gardens. A number of animals are kept, including horses, chickens, ducks, pigs, sheep, and various small companion animals, including house cats.

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**.

This is a good home. The staff team work together effectively to achieve good outcomes for young people. Young people feel positive about this placement and acknowledge that staff work hard to keep them safe and prepare them to move on. Comments from young people include: 'This is the best home I have ever been in. Staff believe in you and give you chances to move forward. I have achieved so much since I have been here. I don't do risky stuff anymore. If you help yourself and listen then it's amazing how well you can do.'

Overall, relationships between staff and young people are good, sometimes outstanding. Staff are highly motivated to support young people to achieve good outcomes from their placement, regardless of their length of stay. Safeguarding practice is robust and multi-agency working is good. This enables young people to benefit from a variety of services that support their safety, health and education.

Young people make good progress taking into account their starting point at the time of placement. Each young person has a detailed placement plan and risk assessments which have been developed by the home. This detailed document includes supporting young people to make appropriate choices, recognise risks, build self-respect and have a more positive self-view. While statutory meetings are held and well attended, the service struggles to acquire written current documentation in a timely way and often information is not very comprehensive. Understandably, this

concerns the manager as she feels she is not suitably informed of the local authority's care planning requirements.

There are some areas identified for further improvement. These include: ensuring that notifications are forwarded to Ofsted within the required timescales; ensuring that local authority documents and minutes from meetings are available and accessible on the young person's files; and ensuring that staffing recruitment and vetting information is available within the home.

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
30 (2001)	ensure that if any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 5 takes place, the registered person shall without delay notify the persons indicated in respect of the events in column 2 of the table (Regulation 30(1))	16/11/2012
12A (2001)	ensure that a record in permanent form is maintained in respect of each child who is accommodated in a children's home, which includes the information, documents and records specified in Schedule 3 relating to that child and is kept up to date. (Regulation 28 1(18))	16/11/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure the children's home has a record of the recruitment and vetting checks for those working for the children's home. (NMS 16.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Overall, outcomes for young people living at this service are good. Some young people are admitted in a planned way, others are in an emotional crisis and their placement is an emergency. Since the last inspection, all three young people at the home are new. The manager and staff team have supported them to make good personal progress. Staff have the necessary skills and experience that enable them to

assess and address the individual needs of young people quickly, despite not always receiving essential information and associated care plan documents from the placing authorities. Young people are provided with a safe, calm and nurturing environment that enables individuals to take time to achieve, reflect on their behaviour and make safer choices.

Young people enjoy nutritious and home-cooked meals. Young people say they are encouraged to help plan, prepare and cook meals with staff. Mealtimes are planned and sociable occasions. Staff and young people eat together in the large farmhouse kitchen. This provides good opportunities for young people to learn important skills, such as food hygiene, budgeting and cooking a range of home-cooked meals.

Young people's educational attainment and attendance are good, and outstanding for some. Staff actively promote and support young people's educational attendance and attainment. It is apparent that staff value education and provide lots of support and encouragement. The effective joint working relationship established between the school and home ensures that each young person receives a bespoke care and education service. In addition, young people are given additional support during exams and while accessing college placements. Young people say they enjoy school and are supported and encouraged to achieve and develop skills and experiences of their interest.

Young people benefit from good healthcare support. Staff recognise that young people have the same right to access services they need to improve their life chances. Specialist support is accessed and provided if the need is identified and at the request of the young people in a range of areas. These include regular sessions with a clinical psychologist and accessing domestic violence therapy sessions. Staff also work hard, for example, through one-to-one sessions, to help young people develop a better understanding of healthy living, such as exercise and diet, and how to take better responsibility for keeping themselves safe and healthy through their own lifestyle choices.

Young people benefit from staff helping them to establish and sustain contact. Young people confirm that staff support them in seeing their families and they are encouraged to be respectful and maintain positive relationships with their family and friends.

Quality of care

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

The quality of young people's care is good. Young people benefit from a staff team that has a good understanding of their individual needs and what it is hoped they will achieve from their placement, however short. The home employs a good mix of staff. They provide positive role models who work effectively with young people to establish good values, such as respect, tolerance and self-motivation. Staff provide good parental guidance and a really good sense of nurturing.

Young people feel that staff are interested in their welfare and their future. An independent reviewing officer commented within a survey that the home is warm, welcoming and meeting the young person's needs. The views of the young person were described as, 'this home is simply the best'.

Staff and young people enjoy really positive and constructive relationships. Communication is open and honest. Young people confirm that they feel that they can talk freely to their key worker, staff in general and the management team. Young people also understand how to make a complaint and feel confident that any issue raised would be responded to positively. Young people are frequently consulted. Consequently, they are able to influence decisions about the home and particularly their day-to-day lives and plans for the future.

Suitable procedures are in place to manage and administer medication. Staff have had suitable training in the safe administration of medication and all staff have on-going first aid training.

Staff ensure that young people have regular opportunities to participate in a good range of purposeful and enjoyable activities. Young people are complimentary about such activities, that include horse riding, day trips away and visits to the cinema. They also enjoy sociable times at home, such as using DVDs, cultural themed nights and cooking or baking with staff.

The home is within easy reach of the local town. Some young people frequently use public transport while accessing contact with family and friends. The outdoor environment that houses outbuildings and a range of animals presents its own risks to young people. Staff are very mindful of this and work hard to provide young people with the appropriate supervision, insight and knowledge about how to keep themselves safe while outdoors. Effective links are established and maintained with the local police community officer; as a result, young people have a better view, understanding and respect for their role and responsibilities when undertaking their duties.

The home is warm, homely and spacious. Each young person has a good-sized and well-equipped single bedroom, which they are able to personalise. Externally, young people enjoy spending time with the pigs, sheep, horses, chicken and ducks. Young people say they do not have to look after the animals, but they do because they want to and enjoy it.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

There are good systems in place to keep young people safe. Young people feel safe and protected. They feel that staff act in their best interests.

Staff receive training in safeguarding young people during their induction and this is refreshed regularly. Staff are aware of the correct procedures to follow in the event

of a safeguarding issue. A recent incident that resulted in police intervention was reported to the local authority. However, this incident was not reported to Ofsted within the required timescales. Discussions during this inspection confirmed that the manager and all staff are fully aware of the requirements to report such incidents.

Young people know they are expected to behave well. Staff provide clear boundaries combined with a very nurturing approach. This involves open discussion with young people, their parents and social workers. This approach engages young people very well and enables them to make informed choices about their behaviour. Young people are given individual incentives, mostly financial, which enable them to meet specific targets. Young people like this approach and achieve well. Sanctions are used; young people say these are fair and proportionate. The sanctions imposed enable the young people to reflect and learn from their misbehaviour. Physical restraints are rarely used. Staff have regular training. All physical interventions that take place are monitored and reviewed by the Registered Manager. Records detail that following any intervention, the young people's views are sought and they are appropriately debriefed.

Young people rarely go missing from the home. Staff are aware of the triggers that have led to young people going missing. Young people are provided with information about the risks associated with such behaviour and they are given opportunities to discuss their feelings and strategies to prevent further occurrences.

Discussions confirmed that comprehensive staff recruitment procedures, including clearance checks, are followed, with all checks having to be in place before a new member of staff starts working with young people. However, these records are held at the home's head office. As a result, staffing profiles detailing safer recruitment practice could not be verified during inspection. Visitors to the home are also vetted and supervised. These practices support the view that young people are protected from those who may harm them or place them at risk.

The home's health and safety measures provide a safe environment for young people to live comfortably. The building is well maintained, and associated safety checks to oil, electric and fire equipment are carried out at the required intervals.

Leadership and management

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

This is a well-managed children's home. The Registered Manager and the small staff team are highly committed and experienced in providing a quality service. Their nurturing approach, combined with consistent parental guidance, enables young people to achieve good outcomes from this placement. The home is well resourced and employs a sufficient number of staff to maintain good cover. Care staff benefit from regular staff meetings, supervision and personal development plans, which mean their training needs are regularly reviewed and addressed. There is a rolling programme of training provided, including refresher training in mandatory areas such as child protection, management of behaviour and first aid.

The home has a detailed Statement of Purpose and children's guide. Information is regularly reviewed and updated, so that anyone using the service has an up-to-date knowledge of what they can expect.

The home has a history of good compliance. The one recommendation made at the last inspection in March 2012 has been fully addressed. The service continues to demonstrate capacity for further improvement. For example, there is a comprehensive development plan in place and also during this inspection all staff showed a clear commitment to positively addressing identified shortfalls. These shortfalls include: ensuring the local authority's care plans are current and in place for each young person in placement; notifiable incidents are forwarded in the appropriate timescales; and information relating to safer recruitment checks are accessible in the home for inspection.

The home's quality monitoring processes have significantly improved outcomes, for example, through better consultation with young people, parents and social workers and monitoring patterns and trends.

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.