

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 accommodates up to eight young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties or learning disabilities. It is provided by a private organisation.

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**.

Overall, the home provides very good levels of care and support to young people who are vulnerable, have complex needs and who may pose a significant risk to themselves or others. Through good consistent management and a dedicated, enthusiastic staff team, the outcomes achieved by all young people are good.

Honest and trusting relationships between staff and young people combine to help keep young people safe from harm and exploitation. Young people continue to develop an awareness and understanding of how to stay safe. In addition, they are continuing to develop socially acceptable behaviour. Their self-confidence and self-esteem has improved substantially since their admission.

The atmosphere within the home is extremely friendly, warm, relaxed and supportive. The young people are very polite and demonstrate a great sense of humour with both staff and visitors.

All young people are fully supported to attend school, college or work placements. Staff at the home have high aspirations for the young people and encourage them to have high aspirations for themselves. There is an extremely wide and varied choice of physical, cultural, sporting, or simply recreational activities. This helps to keep young people fully occupied and provides them with significant opportunities to acquire confidence and take pride in their achievements.

Areas identified for improvement relate to: the administration of prescribed medication, pathway planning for young people approaching adulthood, written

records retained within the home and the home's statement of purpose. However, these have not directly impacted on the safety and welfare of young people.

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
21 (2001)	ensure that any medicine which is prescribed for a child is administered as prescribed, to the child for whom it is prescribed. (Regulation 21 (1)(b))	30/09/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure that each young person who is old enough has an up-to-date and comprehensive pathway plan in place to aid their transition into adulthood. (NMS 12.2)
- review the home's Statement of Purpose to ensure it fully records the skills and competencies of the current staff team (NMS 13.3)
- ensure that the results of all statutory reviews of placement plans are recorded on the child's file, and individuals responsible for pursuing actions at the home arising from reviews are clearly identified. (NMS 25.8)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Young people living at the home flourish and receive individualised help and support. They enjoy living in a stimulating and vibrant environment where they are enabled to learn and to experience a wide range of new activities. Examples of such activities include horse-riding, gorge walking, long distance hikes as well as more sedate activities like trips to the cinema, and bowling. One young person said, 'the staff here have been great I really enjoy living here'. Another young person said, 'I love the farm. I just enjoy being outdoors and working with the animals'. Involvement in a wide range of community based activities is an integral part of the care provided to young people. Their involvement in a diverse range of activities helps them to develop socially acceptable behaviour, grow in confidence and improve their self-

esteem.

Young people living at the home have a history of posing a significant risk to themselves or others. The level of risk dictates that a high staffing ratio is necessary to help ensure the safety of young people or those in the community. Young people are supervised by an organised and self-motivated team who meet regularly both informally during activities and at mealtimes, formally and in keyworker meetings. This provides young people with the opportunity to talk about their care and how the home is run. In addition, formal keyworker systems are very effective in helping young people to achieve their agreed goals, to develop new ones and to keep themselves safe. Written records show that the content of these meetings regularly focuses on the young person's care plan, how they can keep themselves safe, healthy living and their achievements. Two young people who completed questionnaires said that their time at the home has been good and that they enjoy living there. Staff and young people were observed to speak openly and freely with each other about a wide range of different subjects. Young people are able to influence how the home is run.

Staff provide consistent, sound advice and support to young people on how to stay fit and healthy. All young people are registered with local primary health care providers, and any young people who are ill or suffer accidents are quickly attended to. Young people who have specialist health care needs are supported and encouraged to access secondary health care services such as the looked after nurse for children or psychology and therapy services. Young people enjoy a healthy and varied diet. This means that the health of the young people is fully safeguarded and they are learning appropriate coping mechanisms to deal with their individual anxieties or issues.

All young people have developed increased self-esteem and confidence. They receive comprehensive and consistent levels of help and support to learn both new things and to develop their independence. Young people are supported and encouraged to take part in activities for daily living and to increase their levels of independence. A structured programme is used within the home for teaching young people daily living skills. This helps equip them with the skills necessary to take care of themselves. However, not all young people who are old enough have comprehensive and detailed pathway plans in place. Pathway plans are an essential part of helping a young person to move successfully into adulthood. Without them young people will not know what help they can expect and who will provide this help.

Formal education for young people at the home is at the cornerstone of their care. The attendance of young people at school, college or work placement is exemplary and staff are persistent in their efforts to ensure this continues. Regular attendance at school helps young people to learn new things and to achieve their maximum potential. This in turn helps them to develop their confidence, self-esteem and improves their life chances.

Quality of care

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

The home provides a very warm, enthusiastic and supportive environment in which young people can develop both physically and emotionally. Admissions to the home are planned in detail and structured around the needs of individual young people, including those already living at the home. Placements at the home are underpinned by comprehensive, multi-disciplinary assessments of need. This helps to ensure that the placement of a young person at the home has the greatest chance of success. In addition, the home has developed its own placement plans for meeting the individual needs of young people. This means that staff know what the assessed needs of young people are and how they can be met.

Keyworkers regularly review and monitor the care they provide to young people. Staff are able to evaluate the care provided and to fully understand the changing needs of young people. This in turn helps them to act quickly in meeting those changing needs. However, written records of all statutory reviews undertaken are not available within the home. This means that important decisions affecting the lives of young people may not be carried out in a prompt and timely fashion.

Young people were observed to talk freely and openly with staff. One young person said, 'I know they listen to me. They can't always do what I want but at least they listen'. Within the home there is a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. Staff provide excellent role models for young people and they actively promote a positive culture. This helps to ensure that young people are able to participate in a wide range of activities, which in turn helps them to develop their confidence and self-esteem.

Members of staff are fully committed to ensuring that each young person admitted to the home enjoys a positive experience while living there. Young people are given the opportunity to participate in a full and varied programme of activities and learning opportunities. All achievements are actively celebrated and young people are able to develop both physically and emotionally. Young people spoken to said, 'The home's great.' Overall, young people make very good progress and are happy living at the home.

Young people enjoy living in an urban area with good communication and transport links to nearby rural areas and parks. Each young person has their own bedroom and they are encouraged to make them 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 a meal together. In all, the home provides a bright and extremely comfortable, pleasant environment for young people to enjoy.

Young people are encouraged to enjoy a healthy active lifestyle. All dietary needs are catered for and members of staff have undergone training in safe food hygiene. All meals are both well balanced and nutritious. 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. Written records for the administration of medication are accurate. However, the records also indicate that medication was, on one occasion,

given to a family member of a young person. The medication was not given in its original container. This means that the directions for the administration may not have been followed and the young person may not have received the correct dose of medication at the correct time. The welfare of young people is, not therefore, fully safeguarded.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are safeguarded by robust planning and risk management strategies, and as a result, even the most vulnerable young people achieve a sense of safety, with young people themselves saying they felt safe and looked after.

Since the last inspection there have been no incidents of bullying within the home and no occasions when a young person has been reported as missing. High staffing ratios and attentive staff help to ensure the safety of young people. The manager and all members of staff are trained in safeguarding and receive refresher training to keep their skills and knowledge up to date. This helps to ensure they are both confident and competent in dealing with any safeguarding issues should they arise.

Positive behaviour is promoted through good role modelling from staff and consistency in the implementation of boundaries and individual strategies. The use of sanctions to help young people modify their behaviour is seldom if ever used. Young people receive frequent praise and support for displaying a positive attitude and for behaving in a responsible manner. Staff are trained and skilled in de-escalation techniques which reduces the risk of physical intervention. There have been no incidents since the last inspection when staff have found it necessary to restrain or hold a young person. This means that young people are learning to manage their own behaviour in an appropriate manner.

The home is well maintained and regular health and safety checks are carried out. The home's manager is responsible for the oversight of health and safety within the home and its maintenance. This ensures a prompt response to any issue within the building. Young people, staff and visitors are kept safe whilst in the home.

There have been no new appointments to the staff team since the last full inspection. The home has clear, robust recruitment policies and procedures in place. Written references received by the home in relation to prospective employees are checked verbally for their authenticity. This means that the welfare of young people is fully safeguarded.

Leadership and management

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

The home's manager and senior staff are experienced, competent professionals who provide clear leadership to the staff team. Staff members are enthusiastic and fully

motivated. They are encouraged to create new, challenging opportunities for the young people living at the home. The home meets the aims and objectives set out in its Statement of Purpose. However, the Statement of Purpose does not fully describe the experience of all staff members. Placing authorities know precisely what the home sets out to achieve and how young people placed there will be looked after. However, they do not have a full understanding of the skills and qualities of each staff member.

Monthly staff meetings take place to ensure consistent messages are conveyed to the team and to discuss behaviour support strategies for young people. Staff commented that they find these meetings to be a useful development tool. In addition, staff also commented that they feel well supported by the management team and senior staff. All staff have a sound understanding of the needs of the individuals in their care. They are child centred and outcomes focused. Young people's experiences at the home, since their admission, have had a significant impact on many aspects of their lives. This is demonstrated in the feedback received from young people, placing social workers and independent reviewing officers.

The home's owner, manager and senior staff have demonstrated a capacity for, and commitment to, further improvement. Requirements and recommendations raised at the previous inspection have been fully met. In addition, the manager has a development plan for the home in place. The manager and staff know what improvements they wish to make.

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

The home's manager 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. Monitoring visits from someone independent of the home take place every month. The person undertaking these visits talks, where possible, to staff and young people. In addition, and where possible, the visiting officer talks with the parents or relatives of young people themselves. These visits help to ensure that the home is run appropriately and that young people are well cared for. In addition, the knowledge and understanding of parents and staff about what strategies may work to help young people develop their independence and mature is borne in mind.

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* and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes.