

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Bridget Goddard
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Date of last inspection	19/12/2011
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Service information

Brief description of the service

A private company owns and operates this children's home. The setting accommodates a maximum of two young people of either gender who have complex emotional, behavioural and educational difficulties. The company's treatment model is based on attachment theory. If young people are not able to attend main-stream schooling, they can attend the company's specialist education unit. The company's working livestock and arable farm provides opportunities for young people to learn new skills.

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**.

Young people strongly benefit from living in a good home with an outstanding quality of care. The home is very child-centred with highly individualised care strategies, and good involvement of young people. This means that young people have maximum opportunities to flourish and grow. Young people further benefit from creative on-site educational opportunities, and active support and oversight to encourage optimum mental health. The home has a positive approach to behaviour management, but some young people are often physically restrained. Although these incidents are appropriately discussed at care meetings and records are well kept, there is insufficient management oversight of both the overall policy and any trends and patterns. Staff like working at the home and are well-supervised and trained.

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
17B (2001)	ensure that the policy on positive intervention is reviewed to ensure that it is compliant with the appropriate regulation. (Regulation 17B (1))	24/08/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure that records are regularly monitored to identify any patterns or trends, with specific reference to records of restraint for individual young people. (NMS 21.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are newly established in this home, but are still making good progress. They are developing strong attachments to staff and learning to live with others saying, 'they're okay; we are getting on better'. Young people are proud of their rooms and how they have personalised them. They understand the routine of the day and can happily tell others what happens when. They are discovering that they have new skills, for example in caring for animals, and are continuing to develop good understanding of their backgrounds both through regular contact and dedicated work. Some young people now have increased contact with those important to them, and are now better equipped to deal with the emotional complexities arising from this.

Young people's community health needs are effectively met and young people also benefit from bespoke psychological services which promote their emotional health. Young people are physically healthy and enjoy nutritious food and appropriate exercise. They do not use any harmful or addictive substances.

Young people have excellent school attendance and are enthusiastic about their time at school. They clearly enjoy helping with activities as part of a standard domestic routine and gain both pleasure and useful skills from playing board games with staff. Young people are developing both personal organisation and self-care skills, and are beginning to engage in age-appropriate activities in the community.

Quality of care

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

Young people say that staff are, 'kind, caring and listen'. Although some young people often need staff to help them regulate their behaviour, these episodes are usually short-lived and relationships between staff and young people are very

positive. The home is run in a completely child-centred fashion with great attention being paid to which inputs will produce the maximum benefit for young people. This means that for example, promoting individual young people's welfare is the focus of staff meetings with considerable thought and energy being given to problem solving and improving any issues. Placing authorities say that, 'the home's communication is open and clear' and that the home, 'makes exceptional efforts to stay engaged with young people'.

Young people make highly valued contributions to the running of the home in a way that reflects their needs and abilities. They enjoy suggesting and picking activities and choosing their favourite meals. However, young people do not always get what they would like immediately. Sometimes their requests are appropriately contingent on their behaviour, for example, having a pet in their room or a day out to a local attraction. This means that young people are particularly proud when they achieve a much-wanted treat through their own efforts and this helps build trust in both staff and themselves.

Young people's feelings and views about all aspects of their care are regularly sought at weekly house meetings and their views are incorporated into the daily logs on their care. These views help contribute to each young person's comprehensive and highly individualised placement plans. These plans are forged during a multi-disciplinary assessment process involving all important parties. The plan is overseen by clinical specialists, and formally discussed and tweaked at regular planning meetings. This meticulous attention to what young people need and feel helps ensure that young people flourish.

Young people's health needs are strongly promoted. In particular, staff ensure that young people have excellent opportunities to secure optimum psychological health. Specialist clinicians oversee each young person's placement and offer regular advice and guidance to the staff group. If young people require direct clinical input then this is delivered in a bespoke fashion, geared to the needs of that individual young person. For example, younger children may have play therapy rather than counselling sessions.

Young people attend the company school where they have creative opportunities to achieve educationally by following particular interests for example, through projects geared around the company farm. Relationships between home and school staff are strong, with daily opportunities for purposeful communication about young people and mutual homework expectations. Staff take young people to school and expect, and get, full attendance.

Staff are keen to promote young people's interests and support their attendance at uniformed activities and organised physical exercise. Young people particularly enjoy routine activities around the home and local environment and are proud of their recent overnight camping experience and of their work on the home farm. These purposeful and enjoyable shared activities help young people develop both strong relationships with staff and personal self-confidence.

The home is well located with very good outdoor facilities nearby and is designed to effectively maximise individual space and positive group living. For example, there are two lounges and each young person's bedroom has access to a personal bathroom. At the last inspection, a recommendation was made about the condition and maintenance of the home. This has been fully met and young people live in a very pleasant domestic environment.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people clearly demonstrate, by their relaxed demeanour and warm and affectionate behaviour to staff, that they feel safe in this home. Young people say, 'Staff take care when I am angry, they stick with me even when I am cross and I say bad things.' High staff ratios and thorough knowledge of each young person protect them from bullying behaviour. Highly individualised risk assessments help keep young people safe. These are reviewed and updated on a monthly basis and communicated to all parties involved.

Young people do not go missing, but there are clear arrangements and risk assessments in place to manage that risk should it happen. Although there have not been any allegations of harm made, preliminary discussions have already been held with local authority safeguarding staff, based on risks identified during young people's assessment. This proactive attention to such risks minimises the risk of harm to young people. The home has highly appropriate individualised strategies in place to promote positive behaviour with praise and rewards. There are simple shared house rules, clear re-iteration by staff of boundaries and minimal use of sanctions.

The home's philosophy is to defuse or avoid flashpoint situations as much as possible, but there are high rates of restraint for some young people. However, restraint records are well kept, sent to placing authorities, and restraint incidents are discussed with staff, young people and at care planning meetings so that any lessons can be learnt. Staff have appropriate knowledge of when restraint is permissible, but this is not accurately portrayed in some policy documents. This means that there is a risk that restraint could be used inappropriately. There is no evidence that this has actually been the case. However, explicit management oversight of this area would be beneficial.

Staff ensure that the home environment is kept safe and secure by careful completion of health and safety checks including fire drills, which routinely involve young people.

Leadership and management

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

The home is generally very effectively and efficiently overseen by the Registered

Manager. Much of the day-to-day management of the home is ably carried out by the assistant manager. The recommendation from the last inspection has been fully met and the home has continued to make progress, for example, by buying an adjacent field for young people. This has usefully enabled more outside activities and protected the home from unwanted development. There is a further management issue from this inspection relating to restraint.

The Statement of Purpose has recently been updated and gives a clear oversight of the home's ethos and practice which is understood well by placing authorities. There is careful oversight of such areas as sanctions and medication, and managers actively comment on such areas and make modifications as necessary. Managers engage in all meetings about young people and are clearly very involved and familiar with day-to-day care.

There is a comprehensive development plan and this is supplemented by a log which details progress. Staff welcome the home's explicit commitment to continuing to improve services for young people and staff are enthusiastic and positive about contributing to this. Staff are positive about training, supervision and team meetings, and this means that they are as well-equipped as possible to offer high-quality care to young people.

The home is well resourced and maintained and has sufficient staff to effectively meet young people's needs. Records are clear and well kept. Placing authorities praise the home's communication seeing it as 'open and clear'.

Monitoring systems are generally effective, and Regulation 33 reports are received in a timely fashion. These contain useful comments and observations from young people, staff and other agencies which make them particularly effective.

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.