

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Roy Bega
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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

A private company owns and operates this children's home. The organisation also has similar services in the area.

The setting accommodates a maximum of two young people of either sex between the ages of 12 and 17 years who have complex emotional, behavioural and educational difficulties.

One young person is currently resident in the home who fully participated in the inspection.

Overall effectiveness

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

The home provides a nurturing and supportive environment within which young people feel safe and enjoy positive relationships with staff. Staff are proactive in addressing the challenges young people present and work effectively in partnership with external agencies to protect and promote their welfare.

Education is seen as a priority and staff successfully promote attendance and support young people's educational achievement.

Staff have a sound understanding of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding and provide good information, guidance and support for young people placing themselves at risk in the community.

Young people benefit from the consistent application of clear boundaries and say that they are fairly treated.

There are established systems which provide for effective monitoring of the home and the welfare of individual young people.

The staff group work well together and are well supported in terms of supervision and ongoing training. The home is being effectively managed with a development plan in place which demonstrates a capacity for continuing improvement.

Outcomes for children and young people

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

The emphasis placed on identifying and supporting young people's holistic needs is outstanding. The opportunities for exploring young people's emotional and psychological health are central to care planning processes. Young people know how they are being supported as a result of the ongoing and consistent dialogue between them and staff. Changes to planned interventions are agreed with young people. Comments made include, 'Staff treat me as an individual' and 'They are helping me to think better about myself'. Guidelines and goals for each young person are reviewed monthly and include areas such as addressing negative behaviour, contact with family and friends and maintaining good relationships with staff. All contact details are clearly recorded with restrictions also noted. Discussions and records show staff are fully supportive of facilitating contact arrangements and if necessary in a supervisory role.

Staff have excellent knowledge in respect of young people's health needs. Discussions show young people benefit from interventions and support provided by the organisation's and external specialist medical and therapeutic staff. Care staff confirm they are appropriately supported in continuing the therapeutic work on a daily basis. Young people confirm staff are very approachable, listen to them, are understanding and supportive.

Young people benefit by being actively encouraged by staff to take part in sport and leisure activities both inside the setting and in the community. Staff promote the introduction of activities with young people, aimed at learning new skills, hobbies, interests whilst promoting self confidence and esteem.

Young people have numerous opportunities to make decisions about the running of the home and how they are being cared for. Young people's views and opinions are valued. Key worker sessions are held weekly and provide the opportunity for young people to express their views and wishes. The manager is highly visible and approachable. Young people are confident in expressing their views which is encouraged by the staff team. Advocates are pro-actively sought for young people if appropriate. Comments received include, 'I'm asked what I think', 'I have a say about what goes on in the home', 'I get a lot of time to speak with my key worker' and 'Can speak with any staff'.

Education is clearly valued by the home with young people being given high levels of commitment and support from staff. The organisation has a registered school that young people can attend where tuition is on a one-to-one basis or small groups. Young people are assessed on their ability and educational needs to ensure a package is implemented which takes into account each individual's ability. Current young people are achieving well completing General Certificate of Secondary Education exams a year early and being supported to focus on further education. Attendance levels since the previous inspection are 100%.

Preparation for leaving care and acquiring the skills for adulthood is a fully integrated part of the care provided at the home. Staff ensure plans and guidance are carried out in accordance with agreement of placing authorities and specialised agencies. Young people are supported to learn life skills, such as budgeting, menu planning,

cooking, domestic duties, and management of their personal allowances. Comments received from young people include, 'Staff support me with making right choices to become more independent' and 'I get help to do stuff to help myself'. Full assessments are made to determine whether young people will benefit from the organisation's outreach programme or an alternative suitable placement.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from outstanding supportive relationships with staff that are based on mutual respect. Interaction is generally informal, good humoured with appropriate boundaries being maintained. Young people describe their staff as being, 'cool and 'brilliant' and express confidence in being able to talk through problems with them.

Through various approaches, the home seeks to enable young people with recognising and accepting responsibility for their inappropriate behaviours. It then encourages the development of more socially acceptable sustainable behaviours to improve young people's quality of life towards independence.

There are established forums including regular residents' meetings and key working sessions which young people use to express the views on aspects of how the home is organised and run. Young people learn to negotiate and develop confidence in expressing themselves. Young people are listened to and their views are valued in affecting changes on matters that are important to them.

Staff actively promote education as part of preparation for adulthood and provide young people with practical and emotional support. Staff have an excellent understanding of the young people's education and are enthused in providing consistent and meaningful support. The company provides an approved behavioural approach to education known as the 'Award Scheme for Development and Accreditation Network' (ASDAN) which follows the National Curriculum and encompasses a behavioural approach. Designated facilities are provided and appropriately trained staff are employed to deliver the scheme.

Young people know how to report any concerns but rarely make use of the formal complaints process. They portray having confidence in taking issues directly to staff and being listened. Staff are supportive and proactive in helping young people raise issues with agencies and organisation outside of the home.

Young people are cared for in line with their detailed and comprehensive placement plans. Individual needs are identified and well understood by staff. Young people have a clear understanding regarding the aims of their placement and what they need to achieve them. The company employs a range of professional specialist staff in meeting young people's assessed needs and has well-established links with external supporting agencies.

There is a strong emphasis within the home on promoting the young people's physical, emotional well-being and welfare. Young people are encouraged to routinely attend appointments with their doctors, dentist and opticians. They also have access to a range of specialist services providing medical and psychological support. Staff have excellent knowledge of robust procedures for administration of medication.

Needs relating to young people's cultural background and personal identity are identified and positively addressed in both daily living and care planning. For example, young people are supported and enabled to exercise choice relating to

culture and religious beliefs and helped to make links with members of their own communities. Young people also have equal access to all of the opportunities provided by the home.

The home provides a safe, pleasant and healthy environment which young people enjoy living in. The home is decorated and furnished to a standard which creates a pleasant domestic environment. The accommodation provides good spaces for group and individual activities. Young people have their own bedrooms which reflect individual personalities and interests. The accommodation provides good levels of privacy with the provision of lockable doors, en-suite facilities or personal bathroom to each bedroom. The home is well resourced for age appropriate leisure activities and interests to enable young people to acquire and develop life skills. It is located in a village within close proximity of community services. Transport is available for assisting young people to access the community, activities and education.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Staff take positive steps to ensure that the young people live in a safe, secure and caring environment. Young people feel safe in the home and particularly make reference to the home's security measures and the availability and access to adults at all times.

Safeguarding is inherent in the culture and practice of the home. Staff attend training and have access to clear information about child protection and safeguarding requirements. As a result, they demonstrate a good understanding of the action to take should they have any concerns about a young person's safety or well-being. Dynamic partnership working with external partners, such as the local designated safeguarding officer, means that the staff's knowledge and understanding of child protection is continually being developed. Incidents where children go missing from this home are very infrequent, due to the close supervision from staff. Staff are very aware of the children's vulnerabilities and are very clear what action to take should such an incident occur, which include good protocols with the police. Likewise, incidents of bullying are rare, again due to the very close supervision by staff, good placement planning and excellent knowledge of children's needs and vulnerabilities.

The privacy of young people is respected and information is confidentially handled. Staff are aware of those young people who enjoy quiet time in their rooms. Staff ensure that they do not enter young people's rooms without knocking. Young people's care records are maintained securely and contents are not discussed inappropriately. A good balance, however, is achieved between respecting young people's wish for privacy, ensuring their safety and encouraging their appropriate participation in activities so as to promote contact with their peers.

Young people exhibit predicted and unpredicted behaviours and needs. Management and staff respond proactively to this. They use these situations for further understanding young people's needs and past experiences and how best to support them. The staff are aware of triggers, how to respond appropriately and the written and up-to-date plans ensure a consistency of response. Staff are trained in a recognised method of physical intervention but the emphasis is on prevention and distraction to minimise incidents.

The physical environment is safe appropriately secure and well maintained taking account of the needs and characteristics of young people cared for. There are established systems and structures to maintain safe practices and fulfil health and safety obligations. There are robust fire safety arrangements which include staff and young people being familiar with the actions they should take in the case of a real fire. There is a good maintenance and repair programme for the building. The organisation employs its own maintenance staff to ensure faults are rectified as soon as possible.

Young people benefit from a stable staff team. Staff working with young people in the home are carefully selected and vetted. The home has suitably robust procedures in place including a systematic approach that ensures that the company's policy and practice is effective in practice.

Leadership and management

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

The home is effectively and efficiently managed. There is strong, visible leadership which promotes high quality care and positive outcomes for young people. The management of the home is led by a registered manager who is supported by an experienced staff team. This structure is successful at meeting its aims to foster social awareness and mutual respect within the home and wider community. It achieves this by encouraging a happy and caring atmosphere through a professional and motivating environment.

The home demonstrates a capacity for continuing improvement, based on its track record and performance since its previous inspection. The management team have robust systems in place to ensure on-going monitoring is taking place and that information collated leads to improvement and development. The home is able to identify excellent care practice as well as further areas for improvement. Staff are very enthusiastic about working at this home and have very high expectations of themselves and the support they provide to young people.

The home offers care and accommodation for young people in line with its Statement of Purpose and objectives which are understood by interested parties. There is an appropriate young person's guide. The manager and responsible individual regularly consider the running of the home and young people's individual needs to maintain excellent care levels. Young people's needs, development and progress are well recorded to reflect their individuality. The company's practice to determine occupancy levels by the needs of the young people is being followed.

Monitoring arrangements are very effective. Significant events are notified promptly and dealt with appropriately to improve practice where possible. The Regulation 33 visits are thorough and include observations. The manager monitors the quality of care through her Regulation 34 reports but also on an ongoing basis through supervision, involvement with young people, and contact with their parents, carers, other agencies and social workers.

Records are clear, up to date and stored securely, and contribute to an understanding of the young person's life. All significant events relating to the protection of young people accommodated in the home are notified by the registered person of the home to the appropriate authorities and appropriate action is taken following the incident.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.