

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	David Morgan
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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* (December 2010) 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

This home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four young people of either gender, aged from 10 to 17 years old who have emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness of the children's home is judged to be **good**.

The overall quality rating for this full unannounced inspection is good. The service continues to make progress under its newly Registered Manager. There is a positive atmosphere in the home and young people feel very satisfied with the care they are receiving. Previous actions and recommendations have been addressed and three additional recommendations are made this time. These identify minor shortfalls, for example in staff training. There is good attention to issues of equality and diversity.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the needs of the child concerned are taken into account, and recorded, in decisions on admissions to the home (NMS 5.4 and 5.7)
- ensure that any measures of control are appropriate to the age, understanding and individual needs of the child, with regard to the control of electricity to bedrooms (NMS 22.5)
- ensure the design, layout and use of the accommodation are such that children's individual care and privacy are not compromised, with regard to private conversations in the office (NMS 23.7)
- ensure where staff members do not already have the necessary skills, they have been provided with access to programmes of training that address the issues detailed in Appendix 2, including, working with families. (NMS 31.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Overall, the outcomes for young people are good. Young people's files are well-organised. There is close attention to their individual plans, for example regarding

remaining safe and family contact. Staff ensure that young people are able to attend contact meetings and that contact is appropriate. Contact with friends and other associates is controlled when it is necessary to maintain safety levels. Individual needs arising from personal issues or the need for protection, for example, are addressed thoroughly. Link worker sessions on these subjects occur systematically and are well recorded and young people feel able to approach any member of staff. This means that young people are made aware of the concerns of the responsible adults and learn suitable strategies. Young people feel that staff are good at keeping them safe even though they sometimes dislike the measures used, such as controlling the use of their mobile phones. However, young people are taught things that are applicable into adulthood.

The home is also proactive in implementing a system of practical skills training, which young people need when they become independent. This includes topics such as cooking and budgeting. Young people are taught, for example, how to purchase the most economical and suitable items. It is important work that makes best use of the limited time available and occurs as soon as young people are ready. Independence training also includes close attention to health and education. These areas are complimentary and help young people to recover lost ground and achieve as much as possible. Young people learn how to keep themselves healthy and they appreciate the discipline and lessons of regular education. Education is pursued very effectively with high levels of attendance being achieved.

Young people do not appreciate the rural location of the home because it is unlike their urban home environments and affects their social networks. On the other hand, they understand that it helps to keep them safe and gives them other opportunities, for example, the opportunity to be in regular education. There is also a substantial and varied recreational programme on and off site that young people compile every week. This means they can learn new skills, such as horse riding and attend dance classes, as well as other enjoyable activities. In this way they are helped to pursue healthy and interesting lifestyles, much of which can be replicated at minimal or no cost when they leave.

Quality of care

The quality of care is **good**.

On the whole, young people feel extremely positive about their home and staff. This starts with their admissions, which often occur in emergencies. Good practice in this area is not fully recorded, however, which creates a slight gap in the histories of young people. Young people understand what staff are trying to do for them and acknowledge that this occurs sensitively and consistently. They are fully consulted and are told about progress and invited to their review meetings. Young people have routine access to their files. Placement plans are thorough and show, for example, that young people enjoy good diets and receive close attention to their medical needs. Consultation also occurs in other ways, such as shortly after young people arrive and also after they leave the home. Good practice is represented by the comments of one young person who said: 'If we ask for something in a meeting the

manager writes to us and says what will happen or why it won't.' Regarding complaints, there is a particularly thorough process in place, which young people use. One young person wrote, 'I'm happy with the way my complaint was dealt with', and this represents the considered view of all the young people.

Young people get on well with staff most of the time and there is a pleasant atmosphere in the home. One young person said: 'There's nothing wrong with the staff; they treat you nicely and respect you.' Staff ensure they apply a good level of privacy, which is complimented by the small size of the home and individual bedrooms. Personal information is stored securely and young people are not allowed in the office. On the other hand, conversations that occur in the office can easily be overheard in the hallway, which jeopardises confidentiality.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The staff team deal effectively and systematically with issues such as bullying and unauthorised absences. Young people consider that the main reason for not returning home is the attraction of friends elsewhere rather than any difficulties in the home. Commendable efforts are made to find young people if they are absent. However, additional training is required to ensure the safety of staff when they visit families and unknown premises, especially out of office hours.

Staff have a good understanding of safeguarding procedures and there is a high level of consultation with social workers. Positive behaviour is encouraged in appropriate ways with rewards and praise. A young person said there are 'consequences' rather than 'rules', which indicates successful practice by staff. Negative measures of control are reasonable and include earlier bedtimes and the control of activities. With the benefit of hindsight, young people feel that measures of control are used to their benefit. One said, 'they have really helped me with my anger.' Records of such incidents are very thorough and always facilitate comments from the young people. Particular rooms are routinely locked after a certain time and electricity to bedrooms is routinely turned off at certain times. However, this type of behaviour management system is not justified by individual risk assessments and is not perceived to be fair by young people.

Good systems are in place to ensure the physical safety of staff and young people on site. There are particularly thorough fire safety procedures, for example, which include all staff over a period of time and allow for different fire scenarios; risk assessments are kept up to date.

Leadership and management

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

The team have a newly Registered Manager who is making substantial progress. The home has experienced significant difficulties in the recent past but is now benefitting from an effective leadership team. Senior staff continue to make improvements to the service, including to the presentation of the home and the facilities available to young people. Staff consider there has been a dramatic improvement in communication and team work. This has a direct bearing on outcomes for young people and is reflected in their positive comments above.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. There is usually one member of staff per young person, which means that personal attention is always available. Individual needs are addressed thoroughly and with extensive liaison with external agencies. Social diversity is treated positively and the service is proactive in devising new ways to promote social inclusion.

The support of staff is good with all staff receiving regular supervision and appraisals. Staff training and qualifications are also ongoing. Additional work is required to bring the overall level of qualified staff up to the required percentage but this is underway and training is required in only one area, as indicated above. The individual needs of the young people are met by having a mixed-gender staff team.

There is substantial monitoring by the organisation and the senior staff, which exceeds the required level. In addition, the formats that are used are particularly thorough and require managers to analyse circumstances properly. This is a significant contribution to good outcomes for young people. Monitoring specifically addresses the building and files on a regular basis and this leads to the high standards evident throughout.