

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Julian Parker
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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

This is a small private children's home catering for one young person aged from 12 to 17 years who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The layout of the home allows staff to quickly adjust the environment and the care being provided to respond to and meet the needs of the young people being accommodated.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people live in a caring and supportive home environment that encourages and enables them to make significant and meaningful progress across all areas of their life. By using very good, personalised care planning the staff team competently address specific needs enabling young people to achieve good outcomes by developing skills, self-confidence and emotional resilience to the best of their capacity.

Effective safeguarding practice ensures that young people are protected from significant harm from themselves or from others. Young people learn and practise strategies that will safely help reintroduce them into the wider community. Young people respond positively to the consistent encouragement, care and support they receive from their staff team. By interacting positively with their carers they are receiving meaningful nurturing. The regular experience of trusting staff /child relationships effectively develops social learning and emotional resilience.

The views of young people are influential in the running of the home. Young people are encouraged to be fully involved in the decisions that affect their lives and influence the home's daily functions. They significantly inform all aspects and patterns of care being offered. By being actively listened to a sense of worth and ownership is developed in young people. Care planning and practice is meaningful, person centred and fully addresses the complex needs of each young person.

A committed, competent and well-trained staff team ensure young people are well cared for. Staff provide the right mix of skills and experience combined with a detailed knowledge of the young people they care for, enabling appropriate informed support and guidance to be delivered.

The home is effectively managed. The emphasis on good quality and meaningful childcare practice is fully supported by promoting young people's access to full-time education. The home effectively demonstrates its continuous improvement and development through its presentation, policies and child care practice. Comprehensive and informative monitoring systems confirming the quality of care

continuously help to inform how outcomes for young people can be further improved.

There are no requirements or recommendations arising from this inspection.

Areas for improvement

Outcomes for children and young people

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

The ability of young people to develop their full potential is actively promoted by the care and attention provided by staff in this home. Staff commitment, nurturing and tenacity in providing support effectively help young people, despite their personal circumstance, to develop self-understanding, socially acceptable behaviours, practical skills and emotional resilience within this safe environment

Explicit person-centred placement plans clearly identify how individual needs are being promoted and positive outcomes achieved. Staff consistently help young people, irrespective of presenting behaviour, to address all of their day-to-day concerns including those related to background, beliefs, religion and sexuality.

The importance of a living a healthy lifestyle is consistently promoted through personal esteem building and support. This promotes a climate in which medical and psychological needs are being addressed without arousing emotional discomfort. A balanced nutritious diet and access to activities that encourage exercise and promote personal fitness are incorporated into young people's daily routines. By being fully engaged in planning meaningful leisure time young people are carefully introduced to meaningful social and recreational opportunities including community based events.

Young people are making very good progress with their education. They go to the provider's own registered school and attendance is excellent. Young people clearly enjoy school and the variety of subjects being provided both in and outside of the classroom. Reports and displayed certificates confirm that some exceptional work is produced when progress from the beginning of placement is considered. Young people understand the importance of learning by being practically assisted to make informed choices to develop their skills and abilities.

Young people are effectively assisted to develop practical skills and a level of understanding that will help prepare them make a transition towards independent living.

Quality of care

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

Staff provide a very good, consistent level of care for young people that ensures positive outcomes are promoted by the placement.

Young people are able to develop meaningful relationships based on trust with the staff at this home. There is a calm, good natured atmosphere which young people find helpful, unthreatening and extremely supportive as they understand and engage with the home's routines. For example, young people do not experience rejection or intolerance when they present challenging behaviour. Young people are helped to access legitimate communal and social activities that interest them with the practical assistance of their staff team. Special occasions such as birthdays and religious festivals are actively celebrated to make these days a special event for young people. Young people are encouraged to express their views about the home and suggest changes that may improve the service they receive.

The use of sanctions, by staff at the home, is considered as unrealistic when addressing the specific behaviour of some individuals. This helps young people to understand that although there are consequences arising from their behaviour they will not be rejected. Young people are taught that the few boundaries and rules that are in place are there to ensure that they are kept safe and well. Young people are asked for their comments relating to the use of sanctions and physical restraint; these are recorded on their behalf. Young people play an active role in helping staff develop the individual placement plans and behaviour management plans that actively influence how they are cared for. A social worker commented that staff could not do more to keep the young person safe.

There is information about complaints written in a style suitable for young people to access; this is contained within their welcome booklet, the young person's guide to the home. Young people understand they have access to the home's complaints procedures although rarely need to use it because of their close trusting relationship with staff.

Placement plans are comprehensively written and include the assessed needs and wherever possible the views of young people. Young people contribute to their plans and know what information they contain because the plans are discussed with their key workers. Detailed information about the health, education and cultural needs of each young person are contained within plans that are regularly reviewed within statutory timescales. The home's manager follows up on all review recommendations in a timely manner thereby ensuring that the placement objectives are actively progressed.

The home's daily routine fully supports young people's participation in education and facilitates regular school attendance. Staff support young people's learning by a combination of classroom assistance and where necessary supporting educational projects and helping with homework. Young people have access to books, art materials and other educational resources within the home and at the provider's school site. Attendance is excellent at all times and young people value the routine and importance of accessing education. The home's emphasis on personal achievement encourages young people to aspire by obtaining practical skills, certificates and working towards a meaningful qualification.

Staff support and encourage young people to focus on their recreational interests

and abilities wherever possible. They facilitate access to a broad range of leisure activities that provide meaningful experiences and variety to young people's lives.

The rurally located home is within reasonable access of necessary amenities and recreational facilities. Transport is provided as a necessary part of this care placement. The home is maintained well and kept very clean. Living rooms, kitchen-diner and sleeping areas are adequate in size, functional in appearance and furnished appropriately. Young people have sufficient space including their own bedroom, bathroom and toilet. The home is personalised by colourful posters, talented artwork, pictures and personal belongings thus confirming ownership and evidence of the young person's particular interests. The grounds are extensive and young people have developed a garden and successfully keep chickens.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people live in a supportive and structurally safe environment where they are effectively protected from harm. As a result of their staff team's consistent commitment they are able to feel safe and secure.

The safety of young people is prioritised because staff are very well trained in safeguarding and confirm that they can recognise the indicators of abuse and self-harm. They know what procedures to follow to ensure that young people are effectively safeguarded. Young people are given practical and age appropriate advice about personal safety, including potential risks posed by peers or adults.

Anti-bullying measures are effectively monitored by staff when young people engage in communal settings such as school. Young people are encouraged to talk to their carers whenever they have worries or concerns. Social workers say that staff work very effectively with them and other agencies to ensure vulnerable young people are well protected. By effective liaison and sharing information care and safeguarding plans potential risks are reduced. Staff have access to a whistle blowing policy should they have any concerns about professional safeguarding practice.

The potential recognised vulnerability of young people is directly addressed by this placement. Its rural location makes it very suitable for young people who would be at serious risk if looked after in a larger community. Social workers confirmed that this was one of the home's positive attributes at this stage in the young person's care plan. The risks young people may present or experience in the wider community, including exploitation and discrimination, are well recorded and managed. Clear, regularly reviewed risk assessments and explicit placement plans explain how young people are being protected from harm. Staff consistently demonstrate that they can balance the safeguarding requirement against the age related requirement to enable young people to take the considered risks that are seen as part of normal adolescent development. In this way young people are able to enjoy similar social experiences to their peers by engaging in risk assessed and considered recreational activities.

The rural location of this home enables it to manage unauthorised absence extremely well. Established protocols and positive relationships with the local police complement practice. Robust responses are in place should young people go absent from the home or from an off site excursion. The stability of the placement through the use of effective supervision and positive relationships between staff and young people is effectual. Staff remain aware of the potential reasons why young people will go missing and use this information to help them manage their feelings and frustrations in an acceptable manner. The home's agreed proactive stance deters young people from running off and putting themselves in risky or illegal situations.

The behaviour of young people living at this home is usually good when considered within its broader context. On admission young people are informed about how the home can help them and what the few house rules are. This key information is reiterated by their children's guide to the home and organisation. Through day-to-day living young people confirm that they accept the norms of the placement and comply with the standards of behaviour that are expected. Considerable emphasis is placed on positive behaviour with young people being regularly praised and reminded of their achievement rather than shortcomings. All staff apply jointly agreed strategies to encourage and support young people to expand socially acceptable behaviour in all situations, both in the home and the wider community.

There are effective responses available to staff for the management of heightened and challenging behaviour by the use of an approved physical restraint methodology. The need to use these measures is reducing. Improved recording enables staff and the home's management to review the circumstances and effectiveness of such practice. Young people are aware of the circumstances in which such measures may be used and acknowledge these are always only used in extreme circumstances to ensure they are kept safe. Young people express no concerns about the rewards and sanctions used by the home.

Young people live in a physically safe environment. They are protected by an array of health and safety procedures, risk assessments and preventive checks. Staff carry out regular health and safety checks, including fire drills, to ensure the premises are safe and young people know what to do in case of an emergency. Any damage is repaired quickly.

The recruitment and selection of people working at the home follows robust company procedures and checks that ensure young people are only looked after by safe, experienced and knowledgeable adults. The manager is thorough in ensuring that all appointed staff possess the relevant skills, competencies and qualifications to meet the needs of looked after young people. Appropriately vigorous systems are in place to ensure that all visitors to the home are suitably checked and supervised while on the premises. By applying these measures young people are kept safe and are effectively protected.

Leadership and management

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

Young people live in a home that is well managed and effectively promotes their safety and best interests. The home comprehensively meets the aims of its Statement of Purpose and social workers, young people and their families are very clear about the nature of the services and support the home provides through accessing this document. The young person's guide is readable and delivers useful information about what the home provides in an age appropriate friendly tone.

The manager and staff team demonstrate a very strong commitment to delivering sensitive childcare practice tailored to address the complex individual needs of the young people looked after. Young people are enabled to make substantial progress, when compared against their starting point. There is progress across the many aspects of their lives, including school attendance and educational achievement, their emotional development, developing independence skills and learning how to keep themselves safe.

The use of reflective practice helps the manager and her team improve and develop the service being provided to ensure that positive outcomes are being delivered. Particular importance is placed upon listening to the views of young people in the manner in which and at the time they feel most comfortable with.

The ongoing external and internal monitoring of the quality of care being provided is used to inform any practical changes required to ensure young people get the best service possible. Emphasis on the sustained improvement of the service provided by the home, based on its previous performance, is a key goal of the manager. The manager believes that this enhances the progress being made by young people. The annual review of the quality of care is realistic in its aspirations and in the target setting for its current resident.

Young people are looked after by a very competent, committed staff team who exhibit a wide range of skills and experience. Staff turnover is low ensuring that young people can develop trusting relationships with their carers. All established staff have a relevant qualification in working with young people. The team's skills and abilities complement the needs of young people living in the home. Staff display high levels of intuition and enthusiasm and find creative ways in which the diverse needs of young people and their families can be legitimately engaged. Staff place emphasis on developing their understanding of disability, mental health related behaviour, cultural and ethnic backgrounds and sexuality related issues to inform their practical and sensitive understanding of children from all backgrounds. In practice this openness to difference and focused sensitivity on need appears to be working very well.

The manager and staff are committed to providing young people with the stability, consistency and security needed to keep them safe. The staffing complement in place to accomplish this task, while being small in size, is presently sufficient to meet the needs of young people in the most advantageous way. Staffing numbers currently provide satisfactorily for the levels of support needed to promote recreational activities, visits and attending appointments.

Staff receive a comprehensive training programme that addresses the particular needs of this placement alongside the more pastoral needs of young people. Training provides staff with the statutory input, skills, qualification and knowledge to carry out their jobs effectively.

Staff are very well-supported by their manager. They have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and the high expectations placed on them for providing informed, good quality childcare practice. Collectively staff confirm that good levels of support and guidance are provided by the manager, and through exceptional input from the company therapists. Staff regularly receive one-to-one supervision and annual appraisals of their practice which inform their ongoing learning and development. Team meetings take place monthly involving the whole staff team. During these the general operation of the home is discussed and staff critically reflect on young people's progress and consider ways in which the service may be improved.

The home's written records are securely stored and provide a comprehensive evaluation and confirmation of individual young people's needs, diversity, development and progress. Young people's records contain up-to-date information about them, including the relevant documents from placing authorities. The manager is proactive in following up shortfalls from placing authorities who in response compliment the quality of the provision.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.