

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Julian Parker
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Provision subtype	Children's home

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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is operated by a private company which has several similar homes in this area of the country. Care and accommodation for up to two young people is provided. The company has its own school for children not attending mainstream education provision, and also offers (if a child wishes) weekly therapy as part of the on-going care.

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**.

Planning and childcare practice in this children's home is highly personalised ensuring that assessed needs are being addressed by following well-structured placement plans within a safe homely environment. Children are actively involved in the decisions that affect them on a day-to-day basis where these will not compromise their safety. Considered and coordinated staff practice with families, social workers and all other agencies ensures that children receive the right level of help and the specific support they require to help them stabilise and improve their behaviour. School attendance is prioritised, well supported and children's attainment celebrated. Sufficient well-trained and motivated staff who have an appropriate balance of skills and experience provide very good quality care for children.

The competent use of the informative monitoring systems that are in place to review the quality of care provided enhances how outcomes for young people are met. Temporary arrangements cover the absence of a Registered Manager. Shortfalls in the notification of arrangements for addressing the management vacancy gives rise to a requirement. There are some repairs that have not been carried out in a timely manner and some deficits in maintenance that have resulted in a requirement being raised.

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
31 (2001)	ensure that all parts of the children's home used by children are of sound construction and kept in good structural repair externally and internally. This relates to addressing in a timely manner checks required for electrical and oil installations and areas for redecoration identified by the Regulation 33 visitor. (Regulation 31(1) (d) and (e))	03/09/2012

Recommendations

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

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Most children living at his home have gained sufficient insight and understanding to enable them to start addressing their problems and make meaningful progress. By responding to positive daily opportunities to take greater control of their lives, children have started to improve self-help skills, an understanding of their situation and began to develop emotional resilience. By being enabled to achieve and receiving praise for improvement children's self-esteem and perception of what goals are important in their lives has improved.

Children demonstrate through the food and the activities they choose that they understand the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. They learn about the health risks posed by smoking and the misuse of illegal substances, including how this can adversely affect their health.

The needs and requests made by children coupled with an emphasis on good behaviour significantly influence the homes routine. On-going discussion and formalised key worker meetings ensure that children's views are included in the homes recording. By being sensitive to what particular factors influence acceptable social behaviour staff are enabled to construct sensible daily plans designed to maximise the engagement and achievement of children.

By receiving practical help to understand the importance of education, children have actively engaged with the provider's school, including opportunities for reintegration

into a mainstream learning environment. By focusing on achievement and skills key-stage outcomes are actually realised. Children respond positively to the meaningful opportunities for enhancing life skills and developing personal confidence. They can enjoy the practical tasks and support they receive during these early stages of preparation for eventual independent living as well as develop their sociability by living within a small rural community. Staff engage in meaningful activities that encourage children's interests by providing the necessary resources and helping them rehearse various practical skills, such as cooking and gardening, that will help them cope with future challenges.

Children benefit from the support they receive from staff to retain meaningful contact with appropriate adults and family members following admission to the home. By establishing positive relationships with families staff develop a realistic and sensitive understanding of issues that may have contributed to children's placement.

Quality of care

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

Children demonstrate through their behaviour and confirm that staff care about their welfare and that this has helped them settle. One young person said in the comments for review that the move to this home had helped them to decide that they want to live here. The young person appreciated how staff had encouraged choices and how the house had been adapted to help them settle in and make it their home. Staff helped the young person with creative art work and to pursue interests in music and dance.

To positively influence changes of behaviour individualised strategies, underpinned by recorded plans, practically help children to understand the consequences of their actions. This helps them to recognise where their behaviour falls short and how to put them right. Consistent boundaries, clear expectations and age appropriate interventions have resulted in general and on-going improvements to behaviour. The management of difficult behaviour is appropriate, mainly by the strength of relationships that enable diffusing and meaningful dialogue rather than a heavy reliance upon the use of sanctions or physical interventions.

Children know how to make their concerns known and how to use both the provider's and placing authority's complaints process. Practical support is available through access to external advocates, social workers and on-going familial contact. Since the previous inspection no concerns have emerged. By actively listening to issues raised by children the home amends the delivery of care within the home to effectively safeguard both children and staff.

Comprehensive placement plans for children confirm the measurable outcomes that promote their holistic well-being, safety and cultural background. Plans made with children confirm that staff regularly communicate with other agencies and professionals to ensure a holistic service is provided. Examples include; positive liaison with the local education authority enabling mainstream school reintegration

plans to be realistic and timely. Also, active communication with, children and adolescent mental health service recognised one child's placement security as a significant and influential outcome.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The well-being and safety of children is given priority by practice based upon sound operating policies and procedures. By presenting a non-judgemental approach prioritising acceptable social behaviour and safeguarding practice the staff team help children to acknowledge and address any behaviour that places them at risk of abuse or alienation. Children receive direction to reflect upon the consequences of their behaviour. Accepting guidance from in-house therapists, residential staff and outside agencies has enabled children to begin to understand their concerns and behaviour and to concentrate upon their immediate future.

Comprehensive recording confirms regular liaison between the home, placing authority's and local children's services. The home has access to the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures. By having access to independent advocates external to the home, social workers and family members children have a network of adult help should they have concerns about their care. Their rights are respected in this way. One young person confirmed in the written responses that they identified someone in the home in whom they could confide most concerns with.

Considerable importance is placed on the compatibility of children living together. This is assessed during the pre-placement stages following referral and, ensures that children do not become victims of oppressive behaviour. Children receive help to understand the unacceptability of bullying. This important attention by staff helps children to feel safe in their home and with their peers.

Young people live in a physically safe environment and generally well maintained home. An extensive range of health and safety procedures, risk assessments and preventive checks effectively protect them. Staff carry out regular fire drills to ensure the premises are safe and children know what they should do in case of an emergency. Some identified maintenance and environmental shortfalls have not however received prompt attention and compromise the home's full compliance. Although not fully inspected on this visit, the provider follows a robust recruitment and selection process ensuring that the staff working with children and young people are suitable and well qualified. Only experienced and qualified staff can work with children on their own following risk assessment. Children confirm that the staff team's commitment and willingness to be involved in activities helps them feel safe and cared for.

Leadership and management

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

The home is operated in accordance with its Statement of Purpose confirming that it is well organised and its staff receive effective direction despite the absence of a Registered Manager at the time of this inspection. This temporary absence has not had an adverse impact on the quality of care provided for young people but does impact upon the inspection grading.

The comprehensive Statement of Purpose document provides young people, their families and social workers with a clear description of the services and support provided by both the home and the registered provider. The provider's guide for young people is readable and presented in an age appropriate format. In house versions develop the content of this document personalising it to be appropriately readable for each individual child.

The staff team demonstrate a very strong commitment to providing a consistent high quality of service tailored to address the individual needs of children. This encourages them to invest in the home and in doing so make progress across the many aspects of their lives. Including going to school regularly, improving their emotional development by engaging with therapists, practising age appropriate independence skills and by moderating behaviour to keep safe and become socially engaged.

The close working relationships and good communication between the staff team contribute to the effectiveness of daily routines and helps to provide children with known, predictable safe routines within the home's nurturing environment. Staffing numbers effectively provide sufficiently for the level of support needed to promote individual recreational activities, contact visits and to attend important appointments. Children benefit from adaptable supervision levels based on risk assessments and personal knowledge.

Through the provision of training and regular supervision staff are actively supported by a senior member of staff or the interim acting manager. All staff receive comprehensive induction and on-going training opportunities to maintain their skill levels ensuring they are up-to-date with changes in practice requirements. Effective and comprehensive management systems monitor the service and the plans made for the young people living in the home. Incisive monthly Regulation 33 visits present the provider and manager with a regular assessment of the home's performance against its Statement of Purpose by highlighting areas requiring attention. The homes internal Schedule six monitoring systems identifies additional quality assurance adjustments needed to ensure it addresses any potential shortfalls. These systems contribute valuable data that informs the objectives set in the home's annual development plan.

The home's written records are securely stored; data is carefully protected and provides a comprehensive but accessibly readable picture of children's needs, including diversity, development and progress. Children's case files contain up-to-date information about them, including the relevant documents provided by or requested from placing authorities such as the reporting of significant events.

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.