

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Janice Hawtin
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home, which is operated by a locally-based private company, provides care and accommodation for up to two young people who may have emotional or behavioural difficulties.

The provider also operates other homes in the area. The company has a contract with another private care provider to provide education services through a small specialist school, situated approximately 20 miles away.

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**.

The home provides a safe and stable environment in which young people thrive. Effective personalised and planned care is responsive to both the immediate and long term needs of young people. They are happy in this home and make outstanding progress, often from a history dogged by neglect, poor school attendance and aggressive behaviour. Social workers and other professional stakeholders confirm that the home meets the needs of the young people and that their progress at school is exceptional.

The mutually respectful relationships between staff and young people are instrumental in assuring young people's social, emotional and behavioural development. Behaviour is well managed through the use of positive interventions, high expectations and clear boundaries.

The engagement of young people in the wide range of leisure activities available supports their emotional wellbeing, academic and practical skills development. They have recently returned from a skiing trip and are currently planning their next adventure holiday.

The Registered Managers post is vacant and while urgent action has been taken to address this the home is currently managed by a dedicated and determined

professional. She has the confidence and support of the staff team. While appropriate measures were in place to cover during the recent absence of this manager, Ofsted were not informed of these changes as required.

The strengths of the home are understood and action is taken to tackle weaknesses which could disadvantage young people. The development plan is overdue for review and does not currently demonstrate the many improvements which have been planned to provide the best possible service to young people.

Young people know how to complain and several options are available to them. The children's guide to the home does not contain contact details of the Children's Rights Director as an option for addressing any grievances. Action was taken to address this during the inspection.

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
38 (2001)	notify Ofsted in writing when a person ceases to carry on or manage the home. (Regulation 38 (b))	06/06/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure the children's guide to the home includes contact details for the Children's Rights Director (NMS 13.5)
- ensure the homes development plan is reviewed annually and details any planned changes in the operation or resources of the service, or confirms continuation of the home's current operation and resources. (NMS 15.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Young people are helped to develop confidence and a positive self-view in this home where they are valued and treated with respect and understanding. The environment is personalised, photographs displayed around the home demonstrate the range of activities young people are involved in and contribute to them feeling valued. It is

clear from the interaction between staff and young people that they have formed and sustain attachments to and trust the staff. This improves their emotional resilience and instils feelings of security, enabling progress and the confidence to develop social, emotional and practical skills. A professional stakeholder reported that a young person was, 'Doing extremely well, settled academically and engaged in lots of activities.'

Contact with families is encouraged and supported by staff where appropriate. This helps young people to improve understanding of their background and maintain important relationships. The cultural identity needs of young people are recognised and staff understand the importance of culturally relevant role models. Young people are encouraged to keep memorabilia so that they have a permanent record of their time living in the home. This will contribute to understanding their history both now and in the future.

Unnecessary risk taking and unacceptable behaviour has diminished over time and young people are engaged in positive activities. They enjoy spending leisure time away from the home, use community facilities such as the golf course and play team game sports to improve social skills and increase opportunities to develop friendships.

Health care planning is detailed and individualised. Staff support and encourage young people to take responsibility for their own health depending on their age and ability. They attend regular routine and specialist health checks and are helped to understand the importance of healthy eating. Risk taking and anti-social behaviour has reduced to very few incidents since admission to this home and young people do not engage in offending behaviour.

Young people benefit from attending school, attendance and attainment is exceptional, particularly considering their starting point which includes both poor attendance and attainment. They have an enthusiasm for learning supported by high expectations and encouragement from staff. Young people are studying for both academic and practical skills qualifications. This improves independence skills and future employment opportunities.

Young people help with household tasks which allows them to develop the skills and responsibilities needed to prepare them for adult life.

Staff enable young people to express their views and feelings about the care provided. They commonly choose food, activities and décor. Young people are involved in plans for their future, attending planning and review meetings. This allows them to contribute and understand the decisions made.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from the care provided, they confirm they are happy in this

home and enjoy positive and mutually respectful relationships with the staff. Social workers and other professional stakeholders report that young people are doing well in this environment. They receive regular updates about the progress of young people and appreciate the quality of care provided which meets the agreed aims and objectives of the placement. Education providers are particularly impressed with the support provided by carers to ensure attendance, and the work in partnership to improve behaviour and develop social skills. Consequently it has been a long time since there were any incidents and young people are doing extremely well in school.

Young people have detailed individualised plans which identify their care and development needs. This holistic and comprehensive approach to care planning ensures that young people are afforded opportunities to develop the skills and the knowledge they need. Plans are reviewed and updated monthly to ensure compliance and agree development targets and opportunities for young people so that they continue to progress.

Plans and risk assessments identify triggers to difficult behaviour and detail action to support productive responses. Clear boundaries and expectations support the positive behaviour of young people, maintaining their safety and protecting dignity by avoiding the need for physical restraint.

Young people know how to make a complaint and can speak to staff if they have any concerns. Complaints and grievance forms are readily available. The young person's guide to the home contains details of several independent associations who would provide support and guidance to if needed. In addition young people have contact with their family and other professionals who would advocate on their behalf. The guide did not contain contact details for the Children's Rights Director as recommended to provide another option for young people who may need to contact someone independent of the home.

Young people influence all aspects of the care provided. They attend and contribute to care planning and review meetings where their views and wishes are taken into account and influence the decisions made. Consultation with young people affords them opportunities to provide feedback about the service and the staff. Young people routinely choose clothing, toiletries, activities and holidays. The care provided is led by the needs of young people, making them feel valued and contributing to the success of placements. Individual support sessions provide regular opportunities for topical discussions and the early resolve of any concerns or worries. These are also used to inform and educate young people; examples include discussions about risk taking, relationships and family visits.

The rural location of the home is often a deciding factor in choice of placement and benefits some young people, depending on their needs and circumstances at the time of placement. They may be involved in gang culture, escaping domestic violence or have a history of running away. The home has its own vehicle and staffing is a minimum of 1-1 making it possible to transport young people to school and leisure activities. Personalisation of the home by and on behalf of young people adds to their sense of belonging. The environment is homely and well maintained.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people confirm that they feel and are safe in this home. They can talk to any member of staff if they have any worries or concerns. They trust staff to act in their best interest to keep them safe. The staff have a good understanding of needs and provide regular individual support to young people allowing them to express issues and discuss problems.

Understanding the particular vulnerabilities of young people supports behaviour management. A professional stakeholder reported, 'The young person is beginning to respect some adults for the first time.' A good gender balance within the team supports this development. Behaviour is managed through clear expectations and boundaries. Sanctions are used occasionally; however the balance of behaviour management techniques is in favour of constructive interventions. Modelling, praise and reward schemes are also used to develop positive behaviour.

The use of physical intervention is rare and only used to prevent risk of serious injury. A member of the homes care team provides training to all staff on safe use of restraint techniques to ensure staff have the necessary skills should these be needed.

Safeguarding of young people is a priority and all staff receive formal training so they know what to do and who to contact in the event of a child protection issue. Risk assessments support the avoidance of unnecessary risk while allowing young people to take age appropriate risk as part of growing up. They are involved in exciting activities and have been snow-boarding, yachting and on adventure based holidays.

Children are protected by vetting of visitors to the home and a visitor's book is signed to keep a record of those entering the premises. The recruitment of staff includes appropriate checks on candidates. This helps to protect young people from adults who may seek to do them harm.

Regular health and safety checks take place to protect young people. A fire risk assessment is in place as well as fire detection systems. Young people and staff practice evacuations so that they know what to do in an emergency.

Young people confirm that they are happy and they do not go missing from this home.

Leadership and management

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

Pending the arrival of a Registered Manager from another home to fill the current

vacancy the home is being managed by the organisations Practice Manager. She is dedicated and enthusiastic in her role, clearly wants what is best for young people and supports a small stable team of care staff in achieving this. Ofsted were not notified of a recent unexpected change to these management arrangements, compromising external monitoring of the home. The situation is now resolved and the impact on young people appears indiscernible.

Staff work in partnership with other agencies and there are robust arrangements to support education, alongside work in consultation with physical and mental health professionals and activity providers. This ensures young people have access to the services and opportunities they need.

Training opportunities for staff are comprehensive. Young people benefit from a staff team who are well trained and equipped to meet their needs. All are either qualified or undertaking a minimum level 3 child care qualification which supports competence in their work practice. All mandatory training for staff is up to date and they can readily access specialist training to ensure proficiency. Support for staff is provided in several ways including team meetings, annual appraisals and personal development plans. Staff report that they receive the support needed and guidance is readily available alongside regular formal supervision. This ensures staff understand their responsibilities in continuing to develop practice and provide a high quality service to young people.

Action has been taken towards addressing the requirement made at the last inspection. There is now a system in place to review the quality of care through six-monthly summaries of the Regulation 34 reports. Monthly monitoring takes place and the summary reports which are completed in part and are due to be provided to Ofsted in the next month.

Regulation 33 visits to the home are completed to assure the quality of the service and further safeguard children and young people. These detailed reports are provided to Ofsted in a timely manner.

The Statement of Purpose is readily available and offers clear information about the facilities to parents and placing authorities. The aims and objectives are described as reflected in the policies and practice guidance used by staff. Policy documents are comprehensive in providing information to staff and ensure they fulfil their role and responsibilities to benefit young people. Of particular note are policies around police involvement both in the home and in the lives of young people. Following this guidance avoids the involvement of police in dealing with challenging behaviour and avoids criminalising young people unnecessarily.

The acting manager has an attitude of compliance and was keen to address the few issues raised by this inspection as a matter of urgency. While a development plan is in place it is overdue for annual review and does not demonstrate the developments made or those planned for the future.

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* and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes.