

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Kenneth Smith
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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 home is operated by a private company which has several similar homes in this area of the country. Care and accommodation for one young person is provided. The company has its own school for children not attending mainstream and also offers (if a child wishes) weekly therapy as part of the ongoing care.

Overall effectiveness

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

This service is exceptionally effective for the young people placed. The service utilises the single placement to ensure a wholly child-centred experience is delivered with great attention to both the assessed needs and the wishes of the young person placed. The service has an excellent track record of overcoming the potential isolation of a singleton placement. Young people enjoy a wide range of social activity predominantly with peers outside of the care system. Young people enjoy honest and constructive relationships with staff which enable them to grow and mature. Young people are safe in the home whilst enjoying a life in which increasing integration with the community takes place, and they take greater and greater control of their lives.

The only area for improvement noted is a minor detail omitted in the current children's guide.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the children's guide includes contact details of young people's independent reviewing officers and the Children's Rights Director for Ofsted. (NMS 13.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

The focussed work of staff in the home, assisted by managers and therapists in the wider company, ensures excellent progress takes place for young people. Significant recent examples of this are vastly-improved school attendance with young people no longer having any incidents of school refusal or truanting, and a reduction in

incidents of self-harm from many to zero. Both of these are also achievements of young people which bring greater self-esteem and genuine control over their lives. Alongside the improved school attendance is corresponding progress in school attainment. Through encouragement and support young people value their education and attain qualifications and achieve good life chances from low starting points.

It is a great strength of this home that the single placement has in no way detracted from the social life enjoyed by young people living here. The level of integration into the local community and enjoyment of friendships with peers (predominantly outside of the care system) is excellent. Young people keep in regular contact with peers through clubs or informal meetings and enjoy a range of valued social activities, for example, sleep-overs and work appropriate to their age.

Young people are treated with respect at all times and staff take a genuine and supportive interest in their wider family. Young people understand that their identity is valued by staff. Family contact is facilitated through staff who will go the extra mile to ensure purposeful links are made; this may be against a background of complex and challenging family dynamics.

The work of staff ensures that young people develop greater emotional resilience and they are equipped with life skills and experiences to effect a smooth transition from this home to a more independent future. The track record of the home in doing this is strong alongside the excellent recent progress.

Quality of care

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

The relationships between staff and young people placed in the home are always constructive and nurturing; staff know young people well, value them as individuals and discuss plans of care with them to ensure their wishes are central to the care given. The plans for young people are developed sensitively and thoroughly cover issues of health, education, leisure and family contact; plans are followed purposefully.

Health is promoted carefully through lifestyle choices that young people make, with discreet guidance from staff and through rigorous attention to direct health issues. Young people learn to take responsibility for their health, for example, managing their own medication.

Staff liaise closely with education, including mainstream school, to ensure excellent attendance and support in managing workload and achieving progress in schoolwork. Young people learn to value their educational achievement and take responsibility for it.

Activities in the home are tailored very carefully for the individual young person accommodated. The staff of the home are not risk averse and young people learn to utilise free time effectively and maintain honest dialogue with staff about how this is

used. If young people develop close relationships, for example boyfriends, staff take a parental-type interest in getting to know them. However, they do not seek to be overly restrictive and are always positive and help young people to learn from their experience.

The home is a small, pleasant detached house decorated to a high standard. Young people have a major influence over this and enjoy the modern feel the interior has been given. It is a personalised and pleasing home to live in.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are safe in the home and learn to take responsibility for keeping themselves safe in the wider world. Staff are all trained in safeguarding procedures, and they also consider carefully and talk with young people about the safety of their behaviour. Young people who have problematic behaviour, for example self-harm, have learned to control this through the supportive and caring relationships built with staff over time. Staff draw upon the company's training in therapeutic crisis intervention, and make expectations clear for the behaviour of young people without being personally judgemental of prior functioning. Behavioural interventions are thoughtful and sanctions used are understood by young people. There is minimal use of sanctions at the present time.

Staff recruitment processes ensure only properly checked people ever work in the home. The records evidence a high level of scrutiny including Criminal Records Bureau disclosures, references followed up by telephone enquiry, and recorded interviews.

Children enjoy a safe environment and are positively supported to use it to its maximum potential and to enjoy a wide range of risk-assessed activities outside the home. The risk assessment format is complicated, but all areas are filled in thoroughly. The net result is that children are supported to do activities with control measures taken to reduce risk but with no unnecessary avoidance of valued or child-centred activities. Staff are systematically trained and updated in fire procedures, and other safety measures.

Leadership and management

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

This is a very smoothly managed home. The manager leads a staff team which is performing to a high standard and all staff (who often work on a one-to-one basis with the young person resident in the home) are able to manage daily life seamlessly. Staff are supported through formal and informal supervision, regular staff meetings and relevant training. All staff are trained to National Vocational Qualification level 3 and the manager to higher standard. The company provides

systematic training plus bespoke training to address issues the home may be facing. This ensures staff are prepared very precisely for the roles they are called on to play.

The Statement of Purpose and children's guide give a clear overview of the service which is delivered. The latter does not currently include contact details of the Children's Rights Director or independent reviewing officers although this information is available elsewhere in the home.

The manager understands the strengths and development needs of the home and plans carefully for these. There is systematic monitoring of the home through both the monthly Regulation 33 visits and managers quality audits. Issues identified through these are quickly followed up.

The administration of the home is straightforward and sound with clear records evidencing the accountable actions of staff. They are transparent to young people where practical or relevant and stored securely. The wider company management is very supportive to the home, knowing in detail the situation and providing strong support to the manager and staff.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.