

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Gillian Walters
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is operated by a private provider, who has a small number of other children's homes in the locality. It provides a service to five young males, between the ages of 12 and 17 years. The home cares for young people with learning disabilities as well as those who experience emotional and behavioural difficulties. The organisation also operates a school, registered with the Department for Education, providing fully integrated programmes of care and education.

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**.

Young people are making good progress in this home. The home works in partnership with young people, their placing authorities and families to ensure that their needs are fully explored and understood. Young people benefit from comprehensive care planning that takes full account of their individual needs and ensures they receive the range of support required to promote positive outcomes in their lives.

Young people are mostly very settled in this home, enjoying positive relationships with staff that are well motivated to energise young people's interests in a range of sporting activities. They have fun and enjoy the range of experiences that the home can offer. Young people benefit from good routines and clear boundaries that provide stability and certainty in their lives. Young people appreciate the care and support provided by staff, demonstrate trust in staff and confirm that they feel safe and well protected.

A clear strength identified within the home is the successful promotion of contact between young people and their families regardless of distance. The home ensures that young people are not disadvantaged by the geographical location of the home from their place of origin. All young people are supported to maintain and develop their relationships with those people that are most significant in their lives.

The provider has effective arrangements in place to monitor the quality of care and activity within the home that demonstrates a good understanding exists of the home's strengths and weaknesses. As a result of this inspection one requirement and two recommendations are made to address improvements in recording practice in relation to physical interventions and information recorded and maintained in young people's individual records.

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
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline that a written record is made that includes the signature of the person authorised by the registered provider to make the record. (Regulation 17B(3)(i))	19/08/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure that entries in records are clearly expressed and non-stigmatising. This relates specifically to the inappropriate use of the words absconder and absconding (NMS 22.4)
- ensure the results of all statutory reviews are recorded on the child's file. (NMS 25.8)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people are mostly happy and settled in this home. They enjoy successful relationships with a consistent staff team who have excellent knowledge and understanding of their individual needs and how these should be met. Young people participate fully in their care planning and have a sound understanding of their backgrounds, the achievements they have made and the goals that they have yet to attain. As a result, young people demonstrate confidence, a certain maturity and aspirations for their future once they leave the home. A social worker commented of one young person, 'He is maturing and developing his personality, he can articulate his views well, very eloquently. I am delighted with the progress he has made.'

Young people benefit from excellent attendance at the school operated by the provider. They are making positive progress in their education in relation to their starting points and take pride in talking about the achievements they have made. Young people understand the importance of education and developing skills that will increase their opportunities for future employment. They possess enthusiasm about moving on to further education and the future learning opportunities they will have. A social worker commented of one young person, 'He values his education now.'

Young people enjoy living in a comfortable and homely environment that values the importance of healthy lifestyles. Young people benefit from the support and advice provided concerning a range of health matters. For example, young people are encouraged to choose a variety of healthy eating options and are actively discouraged from activities such as smoking that are known to have a negative impact on their health. Young people enjoy the benefits of their rural location, participating in a number of sporting activities, such as fishing, swimming, climbing and football that ensure they have good opportunities for fun and plenty of physical exercise.

Young people enjoy regular contact with family and friends and benefit from the support provided by the home in arranging and facilitating visits. For some young people this can mean they or their family have to travel some distance. Young people understand and appreciate the effort made by staff that ensures geographical location is not a barrier to them maintaining relationships with those people that are significant in their lives. Placing authorities were unanimous in their praise of the home in enabling family contact. One social worker stated, 'Young people don't necessarily like being away from home but staff promote contact very well.'

Some young people are enjoying the benefits of the home's developing programme for independence that enables young people to learn and develop their skills such as budgeting, cooking and managing their free time away from the home. Young people are being appropriately supported to learn new skills that will effectively assist in their preparation for adulthood.

Quality of care

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

Young people on the whole share extremely positive relationships with staff, enjoying their willingness to engage in a range of activities that they enjoy. Examples include, playing console games, football in the garden or spending some quiet time fishing. Staff are consistently sensitive and caring in their approach to young people, creating a relaxed environment that enables young people to experience certainty and stability. One young person's social worker confirmed, 'Staff create stability and structure. It is a relaxed home; the dynamics are good between staff and young people. Staff foster good relationships in the home.'

Young people are central to the development of the home. Their views are actively

sought and taken into account influencing practice and activity within the home. For example, young people have recently been consulted and effectively contributed to the detail of the home's independence programme planning. Young people have proposed amendments that have been accepted and have been helped to understand those areas of the programme that are non-negotiable. As a result, young people demonstrate greater engagement and commitment to working with staff, knowing that their views are important and valued. One social worker commented, 'Young people are listened to and treated as individuals. Staff listen to young people and encourage negotiation.'

Young people are supported by comprehensive care planning that is highly effective in identifying and addressing the full range of their needs. The home works in close partnership with placing authorities, young people and those that are important to them, to ensure that plans are of a high quality that will promote positive and successful outcomes in all aspects of their lives. Young people are successfully supported in their education. Staff liaise on a daily basis with school and are well informed to support and promote young people's achievements.

Young people's rights are extremely well promoted in this home. Young people clearly understand how to complain if they feel dissatisfaction. The home is proactive in encouraging and supporting their access to local advocacy services that can assist in representing their views. This means that young people feel confident that their rights are recognised and that they will be treated fairly and with respect.

Young people have good access to a range of local health care services that ensures that their routine and specific health care needs are successfully identified and met. Young people's general health care routines are supported by staff on a day-to-day basis, with effective guidance and oversight being provided by a health care professional employed by the provider. This ensures that young people's health needs are closely monitored and appropriately supported.

Young people live in a quiet rural village that is situated within short travelling distance of the local city. It is appropriately designed to meet the needs of the young people and is maintained and furnished to a high standard, providing a homely and comfortable environment for young people. Young people are encouraged to choose how they decorate their bedrooms to ensure their own personal taste and identity is reflected. One social worker commented, 'He is not isolated, his identity is promoted to the highest level.'

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people confirm that they feel safe and well protected by staff. Young people do not identify bullying as a particular problem in this home but do acknowledge that at times they have disagreements with each other. When this occurs, staff appropriately intervene to resolve the matter, enabling relationships to be repaired and restoring harmony to the home.

Staff have an excellent knowledge of the young people in their care and are vigilant to changes in behaviour and mood, enabling them to be flexible and creative in terms of the support they provide. Staff are guided in their practice, supported by detailed individual risk assessments and sound behaviour management planning, ensuring that they can successfully anticipate and manage the challenges young people present. Staff are suitably trained and possess a good knowledge and understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities. They are familiar with child protection procedures and local protocols. Young people rarely go missing from the home. However, when such events occur staff are proactive to ensure the young person returns swiftly and safely. It was noted during this inspection that some documentation for young people refers to absences and missing from home episodes as 'absconding'. This is viewed as an inappropriate use of language, given that young people are not subject to any legal order or living in a secure environment.

Staff receive regular training in behaviour management and acceptable physical intervention techniques. This ensures they have the appropriate skills to successfully de-escalate or diffuse a situation and as a last resort know how to safely intervene to protect a young person from harming themselves or others. Incidents that occur are suitably documented in a volume kept for the purpose. However, during this inspection some recent entries were identified as falling short of the required standard, with the absence of the signature of the person authorised to make the record. This had no direct impact of the safety or well-being of the young people concerned. However, it did mean that these records were incomplete.

Young people benefit from living in a safe and secure environment. The home promotes good health and safety standards, ensuring that environmental risk assessments are regularly updated, identifying changes and potential hazards can be minimised or eliminated. Fire safety equipment is regularly checked and maintained to ensure it remains in good working order. Fire evacuations are practiced regularly ensuring that young people and staff are familiar with escape routes from the home in the event of a real emergency.

The home promotes robust recruitment and selection practice, ensuring that all pre-employment vetting checks are completed prior to staff commencing work within the home. All visitors to the home are required to sign in and state the purpose of their visit, providing suitable credentials if unknown to staff or unexpected. These measures ensure that young people are not made more vulnerable by being exposed to unsuitable adults who may do them harm.

Leadership and management

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

The home is effectively managed by permanent Registered Manager with considerable experience in working with children and young people in residential settings. Staff report feeling well supported by their manager and placing authorities praise the quality of communication and support he provides. One social worker

expressed her satisfaction saying, 'Communication is excellent, the Registered Manager always provides email updates and keeps me well informed of all events, both positive and negative.'

The home is appropriately staffed to meet the needs of the young people placed, and there is flexibility within the organisation for the home to draw in additional staff resources when the needs of young people may demand it. The home has effectively developed close working partnerships with three other local homes operated by the provider, sharing knowledge and good practice that supports all young people placed.

Staff receive regular supervision and support and participate in an annual appraisal process that promotes their performance and successfully identifies their developmental needs. Staff have access to a good range of training opportunities that ensure their knowledge, skills and experience are being maintained and developed. All staff possess or are successfully working towards a level 3 qualification relevant to working with children and young people. These measures ensure staff are well supported to provide a good quality and safe care for young people.

At the last inspection on 25 February 2013, two requirements and two recommendations were made that have since been suitably addressed. Improvements have been identified in the frequency of staff supervision and young people's keyworker sessions. Ofsted have been appropriately notified of all significant events and the quality of regular internal monitoring of the home has improved.

The provider has good quality assurance arrangements in place to monitor the quality of care and activity within the home. External monitoring of the home is particularly robust and challenging, ensuring good scrutiny of practice. This supports the Registered Manager in identifying areas for further improvement and contributes to the home's annual development planning. The Registered Manager has successfully completed a six-month review of his monitoring activity, demonstrating a good understanding of his service and the young people placed there.

Young people's individual records are generally well organised and maintained and stored securely within the home. They provide a current and comprehensive record of the young person's life, experiences and achievements and successfully support individual care planning activity. The home is proactive in ensuring young people are enabled to successfully contribute to their reviews. Young people are supported in preparing for their statutory reviews, ensuring they can confidently convey their views, wishes and feelings. A minor shortfall was identified during this inspection in relation to the outcome detail of a statutory review being absent from a young person's file. The document was located and the file updated during inspection to ensure that all staff had access to information concerning the outcome of the review.

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.