

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Martha Nethaway
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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

Situated in a rural location this children's home currently provides a nurturing and safe environment for two young people aged between 13 and 16 years. The home accommodates damaged young people, with difficult and challenging behaviour, who have often experienced multiple care and education placement breakdowns. The home provides one-to-one staffing with a maximum of three young people placed at any one time. The home is owned by a private limited company.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people are safe and feel safe. The staff are effective because young people receive personalised, well-planned care, taking full account of the individual needs of young people. The home strongly promotes positive outcomes for all young people. One staff member commented: 'We provide a warm, welcoming, relaxed, yet structured environment, which encourages young people to develop social, educational and practical skills to enjoy and achieve, and to lead a fulfilling life.'

It is commonplace for the views of the young people to be sought about the quality of care in the home. Good quality relationships exist between staff and young people in the home. The psychological and emotional care is evident in the quality of care provided in the home. Young people benefit because staff respect the integrity and dignity of individuals and provide a nurturing environment.

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people develop a positive self view, emotional resilience and knowledge and understanding of their background and confidence in their skills. Staff offer good quality care, support and guidance which is at the heart of what the home provides to young people. This means that staff begin with assessing what are young people's presenting needs and show how the holistic needs can be best supported through positive choices. As a result, staff give top priority to putting the young person first so that they have some choice and control within their placement at the home.

Young people's health needs including their physical, emotional, and psychological health are being addressed. To help achieve the greatest benefit for young people all primary care needs are addressed, such as visiting and receiving treatment from the dentist, optician and doctor. Young people can then access specialised therapy which includes counselling and art therapy. This allows young people to increase their self-esteem, self-validation and self-awareness. One young person commented, 'I enjoy art therapy because it is active and fun.'

Young people are attending school and attendance levels are nearly always high. When young people are in school it has been a positive experience and they have engaged well in activities both in school and in the wider community. Young people are enjoying their learning experience and are less anxious about their school environment.

Young people are making a positive contribution to their home and the wider community. Young people are provided with a good range of opportunities to help keep their home clean and tidy which helps develop key skills related to cooperation and responsibility. For example, young people prepare and cook their meals twice a week and young people receive lots of praise and encouragement for their efforts. In addition, young people are able to pursue their interest and passion for the cinema, historical reading, and computer gaming and swimming.

Young people benefit from appropriate contact with family, friends and other people who are important to them. The home promotes, encourages and facilitates contact. Young people understand the contact arrangements because it has been fully discussed and agreed at the outset of their placement at the home. Staff are excellent with helping with the practical arrangements such as help with different venues or with travel and transport. Staff ensure that full and detailed records are kept for the monitoring and management of contact arrangements.

Quality of care

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

Young people broadly enjoy positive and constructive relationships with staff and with each other, and generally behave appropriately. Young people are encouraged to express their feelings and emotions without infringing the rights of others. Staff are effective with teaching young people models of good behaviour, such as courtesy and respect which promotes personal, social and emotional development. Equally, staff help young people when inappropriate behaviours occurs to understand the outcome of their action. This establishes over time, many opportunities for young people to learn what is expected of them because of the home's ethos to promote positive behaviours. One staff member commented: 'We try to help young people build meaningful and appropriate peer and adult relationships with whom they can emulate.'

Young people feel that their views, wishes and feelings are actively sought and that they influence the running of the home. Young people participate in weekly house meetings, usually during their evening meal which helps break down barriers to participation. It is routine for young people to comment and give feedback about the choices of food, activities and facilities. Staff welcome constructive suggestions and young people's participation is good because they are confident in expressing their views. In addition, all young people have regular meetings with their key worker to discuss their recent progress, success, problems and concerns. Staff are very good with helping young people to understand why it may not be possible to act upon their wishes in all cases.

Young people understand how to make a complaint because making a complaint is made as easy as possible; complaints are rarely made. The home's complaints process is published prominently and is user-friendly with a centralised reporting system. This means that complaints can be dealt with in a responsive, efficient and effective way.

Young people are cared for in line with their individual placement plan care plan and the contribution of the home to the plans is of good quality and involves young people and people who are significant to them. For example, a monthly summary is shared with the social worker which summarises how effective support and guidance has been delivered in reality. Young people are actively encouraged to be engaged in the process and are aware that staff share the monthly reports with their social worker.

The home provides a healthy environment where young people are able to access the services and support they need to meet their physical, emotional and psychological health needs. Young people have frequent access to a specialist range of professionals which includes psychologists and a psychiatrist. As a result, young people can get the treatment and support that they need.

Staff are proactive and consistent in supporting the educational achievement of young people, engaging with the company's school and successfully promoting their attendance. Where young people have not attended school in a long time, staff work very quickly to encourage young people to resume their education. Young people are making progress and this is evidenced through the work-focused programme which

ensures young people are developing their general skills, attitudes and behaviours. For example, young people are studying subjects related to home management, visiting places of interest and the expressive arts. One young person commented: 'I feel I am really doing well at school and I enjoy doing art and design.'

A range of purposeful and enjoyable activities are available to young people relating to the young person's cultural background and personal identity are identified and positively addressed in both daily living and care planning. Young people are encouraged to maximise their talents and be successful in their endeavours. This is especially true with pursuing activities such as swimming and joining the local gym where young people are being encouraged to take on responsibility for their physical health and fitness.

The home is appropriately located, designed and maintained. Although the home is rural in its location the company have more than compensated for this with the excellent level of transport provision. This means that young people have convenient transport for activities, shopping and home visits. Young people live in a homely and comfortable environment where they are actively encouraged to take pride in their environment. One young person summed this up: 'You will also be expected to help with the washing up and to keep your room tidy.' All young people have their own bedroom which promotes their right to a private and personal space.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are safe and feel safe. Staff help to protect the young people in their care and provide an environment where young people feel safe from abuse in all its forms. One staff member commented: 'All staff and young people are encouraged to challenge any comments or practices of a discriminatory nature. This is especially relevant to racial or homophobic taunts and any form of bullying.'

Young people do not go missing from the home. Young people know and understand that if they have a problem they can talk to the staff at the home or their social worker. Staff work creatively with educating young people about the risks around running away and their level of vulnerability. As a result, this indicates the level of good quality day-to-day care, support and guidance that staff provide to meet the needs of young people.

Young people's positive behaviour is promoted and restraint is not used. The home helps young people build meaningful and appropriate peer and adult relationships with whom they can emulate. Staff have high expectations of young people and help young people to build and practice more positive responses when they have difficult emotional issues. Young people are given daily awards for achievement and young people welcome this recognition. One young person explained how it works: 'For each day you can earn daily points and by the end of the week you can add these up and earn a financial reward.'

Staff working with young people in the home are carefully selected and vetted and there is monitoring of such people to help prevent unsuitable people from having the opportunity to harm young people. The recruitment and selection of staff is robust because the company consistently follows the home's stated policy. Records examined contain checks on identity, references and criminal record checks. The management oversight reaches a good standard.

The steps that the home takes to ensure that young people are safe and feel safe are good. The home has effective policies, procedures and staff training that addresses the effective protection for young people.

The environment is physically safe and appropriately secure, taking account of the needs and characteristics of the young people cared for at the home. A strong feature of the home is the attention given to risk management and sound systems being in place for health and safety management. All young people have in place a personalised risk assessment that is regularly reviewed as circumstances change. As young people progress they are allowed a higher level of autonomy so that they can develop a mature attitude and learn from their mistakes in a supportive environment. Young people are additionally protected because they regularly participate in fire evacuation drills. This means that they know the correct steps to take in the event of an emergency.

Leadership and management

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

The home is effectively and efficiently managed. The registered person provides good quality leadership and champions and helps young people to overcome complex and challenging problems. This open and honest dialogue helps young people to make small and big changes in their lives. Staff help young people achieve a good balance between their aspirations, taking personal responsibility and nurturing more awareness around safety. Staff work seamlessly to help manage and co-ordinate all these areas effectively. The registered person achieves this by monitoring staff efforts and identifying change through improvement and enhanced practice including consultation with young people about their welfare. The registered person understands the strengths and weaknesses of the home and has a clear development plan in place. The home is adequately resourced, indicating the financial viability of the provider. The one recommendation from the previous inspection has been addressed because the home has improved the behavioural strategies so that they are consistently clear to young people.

The home can demonstrate capacity for continuing improvement, based on its track record and performance since its previous inspection and through evidence of the impact of improvements. The home is able to capture the true changes for young people and the subtle changes that young people make. This is borne out in practice with the changes that young people are able to make. One social worker summed this up: 'He is making progress that I would never have imagined possible given his level of challenge a year ago.'

The provider meets the aims and objectives in the Statement of Purpose. Young people understand that they have an opportunity for 'a new beginning.' One staff member commented: 'We strive to create a learning environment, where positive approaches produce positive changes, which aim to compensate for past failure and prepare young people for the future.' Young people, staff and the placing authority are clear about the aims and objectives of the home and what services and facilities it provides because this is effectively communicated.

The home employs a sufficient number of staff, who are appropriately trained and effectively supervised and supported. The staff team are small in number but do achieve good outcomes with young people. This is because they attend regular team meetings which are supported by the company's therapists so that current care practice is analysed and reviewed for its effectiveness. The registered person is diligent with ensuring staff receive monthly supervision and an annual appraisal. In addition, staff receive good quality training to enhance their individual skills and to keep them up-to-date with professional and legal developments. Staff are supported and guided to fulfil their roles and provide a good quality service to young people.

The home's records are clear, up to date and stored securely, and contribute to an understanding of the young person's life. All significant events relating to the protection of young people accommodated in the home are notified by the registered person of the home to the appropriate authorities and appropriate action is taken following the incident.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.