

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Bill Drumm
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home accommodates up to four children who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. It is operated by a private company.

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 young people who live at this home are boisterous and full of energy. They have complex needs and are looked after and supported by an experienced staff team who provide them with good quality care. The management of the home is efficient. Staff and young people have developed warm, trusting relationships. This helps to keep them safe from harm or exploitation. Young people are making good progress since their admission. One young person's independent reviewing officer said, 'our authorities' young person is doing really well and they talk very warmly about the staff'. Young people are developing an awareness of how to keep themselves safe as well as an understanding of the needs of others. They continue to grow in confidence and to learn socially acceptable behaviour.

The atmosphere within the home is relaxed and very friendly. Young people know what their boundaries are and these are enforced by a staff team in a firm, fair and consistent manner. The young people are friendly, polite and demonstrate a great sense of humour. All young people are in full time education. Staff help young people to take a pride in their work, to understand the world around them and to achieve their maximum potential. This helps young people to improve their self-esteem and to aspire to greater things.

Young people enjoy a multitude of activities, which include physical challenges, looking after pets, learning to cook or playing board games and reading. This helps to keep them fully occupied and provides them with the opportunity to gain confidence and take pleasure in their achievements.

Areas identified for improvement relate to: the contact the home's manager has with

parents and social workers, how staff record daily events, the use of sanctions and recording the outcomes of formal reviews. These have not directly impacted on the safety and welfare of young people.

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
34 (2001)	establish and maintain a system for providing for consultation with children accommodated in the home, their parents and placing authorities. (Regulation 34 (3))	31/10/2013

Recommendations

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

- maintain careful, objective and clear written records (Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph 3.28)
- ensure that the results of all statutory reviews of placement plans are recorded on the child's file, and individuals responsible for pursuing actions at the home arising from reviews are clearly identified (NMS 25.8)
- ensure that all sanctions used within the home are reasonable and fair. (NMS 3.8)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Each young person living at the home has a detailed and comprehensive care plan which outlines what help and support they need and how their individual needs will be met. Care plans are written in plain English and make use of pictures and graphics to aid understanding. Young people are able to experience a wide variety of challenging activities and pastimes. Examples of such activities include looking after their pets, camping and hiking trips, playing board games and reading the newspaper. One young person's social worker said, 'they get to do lots of different things and there's no time to get bored. My young person really loves it there'. Taking part in new activities, reading newspapers and looking after their own pets helps young people to learn new things and to appreciate the world around them.

They grow in confidence, improve their self-esteem and develop a feeling of responsibility.

Staff talk with the young people frequently about the care they receive, things they like or dislike about the home and the progress they are making. The outcome of these meetings is recorded on each young person's file. One young person's social worker said, 'he talks very warmly about the staff you can tell he likes all of them. Despite being so young he says he feels listened to and that staff care about him'. Young people were observed to speak openly with staff and to listen to what was said to them. Young people are able to influence how the home is run through regular house meetings and individual meetings with staff.

Each young person has a key worker and meetings between keyworkers and young people take place at regular intervals. One young person said, 'I couldn't be happier, I have the best key-worker ever'. The content of discussions between key workers and young people is fully recorded. Areas discussed are varied and include issues about the individual behaviour of young people, coping mechanisms, relationships with peers and new things the young person would like to do. Key-worker records also include targets for the young person to try and achieve over the coming weeks. This means that the key working system is effective in helping young people to achieve their agreed goals and to develop new ones.

Members of staff were observed to have a warm, supportive and committed approach to caring for young people. They offer clear, sound advice on the importance of healthy living and regular exercise. In addition, young people are all registered with local primary health care providers and they attend regular check-ups. Any young person who falls ill or suffers an accident is quickly attended to. This helps them to stay fit and well.

Young people are able to develop a positive self-image through the encouragement of staff, by participating in a number of challenging activities and by celebrating their success. They each have their own pets which in turn helps them to learn personal responsibilities. Despite their young age, young people are assisted to learn daily living skills and to become more independent. This will give them greater confidence about living independently as they get older and prepare them for adult life.

Each young person is in full-time education and their attendance is excellent. The home's manager and staff place a very high expectation on young people to attend. One young person said, 'half term is good but I do miss school' in conversation with their keyworker the young person went on to say, 'over the Summer holidays can you ask school to send me lots of homework please'? Staff have very high aspirations for the young people in their care. This helps them to achieve their maximum potential.

Quality of care

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

Staff within the home are competent and very enthusiastic. They provide a warm, loving and supportive environment in which young people can develop both physically and emotionally. Each young person's needs have been assessed by placing social workers prior to them being admitted to the home. One young person's social worker said, 'this is a nice staff team you can tell they genuinely care about the young people. My young person really loves living there'. Comprehensive placement plans have been written which the home has presented to young people in a clear and straightforward manner making full use of plain English and graphics. This means that staff, and more importantly young people, know what the assessed needs are and how they can be met.

The care provided to young people is monitored and reviewed frequently. Staff regularly evaluate the care they provide and are able to adapt their approach and management of young people depending on their changing needs. However, the written records of all statutory reviews undertaken are not available within the home. A formal record which shows how decisions have been made and who is responsible for carrying them out is not known. This means that important decisions affecting the lives of young people may not be carried out.

Young people talk freely and openly with staff in both formal and informal settings and they know that their opinions are really listened to. The atmosphere within the home is relaxed friendly and loving. Staff support and encourage all young to participate in a multitude of activities. This helps young people to experience new things and to develop their confidence and self-esteem.

No young people are admitted to the home without clear, detailed planning. The admissions process includes visits to the home, an opportunity to speak with staff who are present and, where possible, an opportunity to speak with young people already living there. In addition, the young person is personally asked to commit to trying to make their placement work, and to embrace the ethos of the organisation and what it seeks to achieve for them. One young person's social worker said, 'they clearly know what they're about and what they are doing. It seems to be working for our young person who's really happy there'. This process helps to overcome any anxieties the young person may have and to ensure the home can meet their needs.

Young people enjoy living in a rural area with good communication and transport links to nearby towns and cities. Each young person has their own bedroom. They are actively encouraged to keep their rooms clean and tidy and to make them as comfortable and personal as possible. The home is well-furnished throughout and young people have a choice of areas where they relax quietly, watch television or socialise. The home provides a clean, bright and extremely comfortable environment for young people to enjoy.

The individual dietary needs of young people are fully catered for and they are actively encouraged to try new things. All staff have a certificate in safe food hygiene and the health and well-being of young people is promoted. Written consent forms are in place for all young people. This enables staff to administer medication or first aid where it is necessary. Staff training in the safe administration of medication is up

to date. The welfare of young people is, therefore, fully safeguarded.

Relationships between members of staff and young people were observed to be very warm and friendly. Members of staff actively strive to provide an environment in which young people can be happy and flourish. Young people spoken to said, 'The home's great.' Young people make very good progress and are happy living at the home.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are kept safe living at the home. One young person's social worker said, 'my young person's very safe living here. He hasn't run away or put himself in any danger'. The home ensures that each young person participates in a wide variety of activities and has structured use of their leisure time. Young people enjoy living at the home and participate fully in all activities on offer. There have been no occasions since the last inspection when a young person has been missing. This means that they are developing a responsible attitude toward their own safety and staff are proactive in keeping them safe.

All staff are trained in safeguarding and receive refresher training to keep their skills and knowledge up to date. This helps to ensure they are both confident and competent in dealing with any safeguarding issues should they arise.

Young people are actively encouraged and supported to take responsibility for their actions, to improve their social skills and to develop their maturity. Sanctions are used to help young people modify their behaviour although they are used sparingly and as a last resort. Written copies of all sanctions used are kept within the home although a copy is not retained on each young person's personal file. This means that a full record of the young person's life at the home is not retained.

There have been a number of occasions since the last inspection when a young person has been held or restrained. The home's manager reviews these records frequently and can identify patterns of young people's behaviour that may lead to a restraint being necessary. As a result, the trend in the use of restraint is reducing significantly. Written records relating to the use of all restraints have been completed appropriately and are retained securely.

Regular checks of the home's fire systems, smoke detectors and emergency lighting are carried out by the home's manager. Young people take part in fire drills and the time at which fire drills take place are fully recorded. Young people live in a very safe environment because the home has a systematic approach to risk management. Health and safety risk assessments are clear, focused and regularly reviewed. Regular checks of electrical equipment also take place.

There have been no new appointments to the staff team since the last full inspection. The home has robust, clear recruitment policies and procedures in place.

Staff personnel files contain sufficient information to fully meet national minimum standards and regulations. Young people are looked after by suitable people and that they are protected from potential abuse.

Leadership and management

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

Staff at the home receive clear leadership from an experienced and competent manager. They know what is expected of them and what their responsibilities are toward the young people in their care. Staff members are fully motivated and are encouraged to create new opportunities for the young people living at the home. One young person's independent reviewing officer said, 'the staff are really helpful, they know what they're doing and what they're talking about'. The home meets the aims and objectives set out in its Statement of Purpose which fully complies with national minimum standards and regulations. Placing authorities know precisely what the home sets out to do and how young people placed there are being looked after.

Written records are maintained on a daily basis with regard to what young people do, who they interact with and what appointments they attend. These records provide an accurate record of each young person's life at the home. However, records relating to one particular young person and a particular series of events were disjointed and written by several people over the course of the incident. This means that the full impact of the issues may be lost and preventative action delayed.

Staff receive daily support from the home's manager as well as formal supervision each month. They know what is expected of them and that they can speak to the manager about any issues that cause them concern. Young people receive consistent care from a well-supported staff team.

Members of staff understand each young person's individual strengths and needs. Working practices are consistent and enable young people to feel safe and develop both physically and emotionally. One young person's social worker said, 'the staff are great. They always keep me informed about what's going on and often ask my advice'. This helps young people to achieve their full potential and to increase their self-esteem.

The organisation demonstrates a commitment to training all staff by ensuring their training is kept up to date. This helps to ensure staff members retain the skills and competencies they have and encourages them to develop new ones.

Young people live in a home that is well managed. The home's manager has systems in place to ensure that the quality of care is regularly monitored. However, the manager does not routinely seek the views of parents or social workers about how the care in the home is delivered. This means that opportunities for improving the home and the care provided to young people may be missed. The manager has a development plan for the home in place. The manager and staff know what the strengths and weaknesses of the home are.

Young people's files are detailed and well ordered. Written information retained within the home provides an extensive record of each young person's life there as well as the help and support carried out by staff.

Monitoring visits from someone independent of the home take place every month. The person undertaking these visits talks, where possible, to staff and young people. In addition, and where possible, the visiting officer talks with the parents or relatives of young people themselves. These visits help to ensure that the home is run properly and that young people are well cared for. In addition, the knowledge and understanding of parents and staff about what strategies may work to help young people develop their independence and mature is borne in mind.

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.