

## Inspection report for children's home

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| <b>Unique reference number</b> | SC444289        |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 19/12/2012      |
| <b>Inspector</b>               | Nicholas Murphy |
| <b>Type of inspection</b>      | Full            |
| <b>Provision subtype</b>       | Children's home |

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| <b>Date of last inspection</b> | 03/07/2012 |
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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, learning disabilities, or mental disorders. It is operated by a private company. The home was first registered in July 2012 and this is its first full inspection.

### 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 is exceptionally well appointed. At the time of the inspection Christmas decorations had been put up, lending a lovely homely touch to the ambience of the home. Children have ample room to do homework, to relax with each other, or spend time alone. The home is situated within extensive private grounds and provides a unique experience for children. For example, the children feed the farm animals and have their own pet rabbits to look after. This helps children to develop empathy and a sense of responsibility.

Care plans are carefully constructed and based on each child's individual needs, abilities, priorities and targets. This ensures that the aspirations that staff have for each child are ambitious yet realistic, and enable children to reach their full potential. A social worker said, 'the young person is a different child to the one he was before he came to the home, he loves the life here and says he wants to stay.' Staff celebrate any achievement, however small, and each child has a huge collection of photographs showing them enjoying life at the home. These form part of the memory box that each child takes when they leave, which helps them look back on their time here with fondness. One child said, when asked to rate the home, 'I would give this place 100 out of 10.'

Staff have very good relationships with children. There is a bond between staff and children which is immediately evident, and practice within the home reflects the priority which staff give to children's welfare. Children's views are taken into account in a number of ways, for example meal choices, or what activities they would like to

do.

In order to keep children safe, staff exercise a high level of supervision in everyday living. This means that children are not at risk from each other and rules out the possibility of bullying. However, this approach does not detract from the ability of children to have their own space and enjoy privacy.

Two statutory requirements have been made as a result of this inspection. These shortfalls, however, have no significant impact upon the welfare or safety of children.

## 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   |
|---------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| 29<br>(2001)  | maintain in the children's home the records specified in Schedule 4, specifically a record of all accidents occurring in the home (Regulation 29(1) Schedule 4(3))                                                                                                                                              | 31/01/2013 |
| 17B<br>(2001) | ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, discipline or restraint in a children's home, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose, specifically that when a sanction is imposed the effectiveness and consequences of the sanction are recorded. (Regulation 17B(3)(f)) | 31/01/2013 |

### Recommendations

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

### Outcomes for children and young people

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

The children currently resident are all relatively young and as a result sometimes struggle to behave in a mature way. However, all have made good progress since coming to the home and demonstrate that they can respond well to the structure and routine which the home offers. This helps them to become more emotionally resilient and begin to develop insight into their behaviour.

Children are very healthy. None of them smoke or do anything else which is harmful

to health. The emphasis on outdoor activities promotes a healthy way of living by providing fresh air and exercise. A social worker said, 'It's great that children are able to take advantage of all the opportunities available here.' Children have exceptionally good attendance at school and are all doing well. While some attend the provider's own school, others attend mainstream provision. This shows that the home meets the educational needs of children in the way that best suits their individual requirements.

Children help out with chores within the house and take some responsibility for their own personal care needs. For example, children tidy and clean their bedrooms on a regular basis, and bring their laundry downstairs.

Most children have contact arrangements which are necessarily complex in order to keep them safe. For example, much contact with family must be supervised. This is the responsibility of the placing social worker, but often staff from the home will share this duty. This flexibility and willingness on the part of staff makes contact happen when it otherwise might not. A social worker commented, 'the home is great at facilitating and supporting quality contact.' As a result, children are able to benefit from spending time with family members in a way which protects them from harm.

Because of the age of the children currently living in the home, formal work to assess and improve independence skills has not yet begun. However, daily life within the home promotes children doing things for themselves. For example, children are able to cook themselves simple meals. One child helped to cook perfect boiled eggs which he served to the inspector for breakfast.

## Quality of care

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

Children have very good relationships with staff. They show evident delight when they see staff who have not been on duty for a few days. Interactions between staff and children are warm and nurturing, and give children a positive parenting experience which some have never had. One child said, 'my first night here I was upset and crying in my room. Staff came and talked to me and it helped me feel much better.'

Relationships between the children themselves are sometimes tempestuous. However, on the whole the children get along well with each other, and are starting to learn the ability to share and to show consideration for others.

There are regular children's meetings which are recorded and enable the children to express their views. However, the formality of these meetings is off-putting for some children. Consequently, staff have other ways of helping children to state their preferences and make choices. For example, there are regular key worker sessions where a child can talk to staff about their feelings. Staff use these sessions not only to listen but provide advice and guidance. There are many opportunities for children to make choices in day-to-day living, for example about what activities they would

like to try. Wherever possible, staff support and enable these choices. For example, one child wanted to take part in his after-school football club with his friends outside the home, and staff have arranged this.

Care plans are tailored to each child's needs and based on good assessment. There is a very thorough referral process prior to admission. This considers the child's history and circumstances and the impact their admission would have upon other children in the home. This process also takes full account of the views of the child and their parents. As a result, the care plan is responsive to the child's cultural needs, and its objectives are well understood by all involved.

The systems within the home which oversee children's health are safe and thorough and are effective in maintaining and improving children's well-being. There are good links with local universal health services as well as more specialist services, such as those which deal with children's emotional and psychological health. Staff have advocated for children with particular needs, for example in negotiating with health professionals to reduce dependence upon medication to manage behaviour.

The home works well with children's schools, sharing information and supporting achievement. The culture and ethos within the home is such that non-attendance at school is simply not an option. Consequently, children are able to avail themselves of every educational opportunity and achieve to the limits of their potential.

The home offers children a very wide range of activities. There is a wealth of toys and games for children to enjoy within the home, which are age-appropriate and can also encourage sharing between children. Outside the home, children can experience such diverse activities as trampolining, gorge walking, fishing, horse riding, and football. Cultural trips are also arranged, for example to the cinema, museums and theatres. The provider maintains rural holiday cottages and caravans, which are used for holidays. This range of exciting and enjoyable pursuits widens children's experiences and enriches their lives. It also helps children to develop confidence in their skills and so promote their self-esteem.

## **Safeguarding children and young people**

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

At all times of the day staff maintain careful oversight over the children. For example, children are not allowed to be alone with other children within the home without adult supervision. Children accept and understand this restriction as being necessary for their own safety and happiness. One child said, 'the rules are good and fair. Everyone knows them, and that they are there to keep you safe.' As a result all children say that they feel safe in the home.

Sometimes, the relations between the children can be volatile, and there is always the potential for cliques to develop which may lead to bullying. However, staff are highly vigilant with regard to the interactions between children. This enables them to act promptly and firmly in discouraging any behaviour which may socially exclude

one or more children from the group.

There have been no incidents of children going missing from the home. Should this happen, there are clear protocols in place with local agencies. This ensures that the response will be prompt, appropriate and thus minimise any risk to children.

Staff manage children's behaviour through the application of clear rules, routines and expectations. Children understand these, and in general behave very well. Staff use their relationships with children to channel and redirect unwanted behaviour without fuss or upset. Very occasionally, children's behaviour is such that staff need to hold them. This is done in accordance with policy and only to prevent children or others from coming to harm. When sanctions have to be used, they usually take the form of a short-lived withdrawal of a treat. However, some records of sanctions have not always included an evaluation of their effectiveness. This limits the ability of staff to use sanctions in a more targeted and effective way.

## **Leadership and management**

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

The home is well managed. All staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities in caring for children and acting as good parents. There are good systems in place for staff to pass over information on children in shift handovers and meetings. This ensures that all staff have clarity about what is happening in each child's life and what additional support a child might need as the result of an incident or setback.

Although the home has been registered for less than six months, it is able to demonstrate the substantial impact it has made upon children's outcomes. The particular remit of the home is well understood by parents, social workers and the children themselves. This contributes to the success it has already evidenced in improving the lives of children and helping them make progress.

External monitoring of the home is thorough and helps staff to maintain standards and address any shortfalls. The Registered Manager has revised and developed the format of internal monitoring to take better account of the views of children and others who have responsibility for them. Children's case files are well organised and easily accessible to all staff. This makes it easy to keep information updated and to amend care plans and risk assessments as necessary. However, there is a minor shortfall in the keeping of accident records. Although detailed incident forms are placed in a child's file following an accident, copies are not kept centrally within the home. This means that information may move from the home when the child leaves and will not be available for future reference. It also means that it is more difficult for the Registered Manager to monitor any patterns or trends.

There are always sufficient staff on duty to enable the right level of supervision and support for children. This keeps children safe and enables them to do things as individuals as well as in a group. Staff are experienced and have the right personal attributes to encourage children to make suitable, secure attachments to them. This

quality of relationship contributes to the success the home has had in moving children forward in their lives.

In addition, staff receive suitable training which is regularly refreshed. The Registered Manager also provides regular professional supervision. This is child-focused and addresses the developmental needs of staff. It ensures that staff have adequate support to enable them to meet the needs of the children with confidence and expertise.

## 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 children's homes.