

## Inspection report for children's home

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<b>Inspection date</b>	30/05/2011
<b>Inspector</b>	Rachel Ruth Britten
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Full
<b>Provision subtype</b>	Children's home

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<b>Date of last inspection</b>	31/03/2011
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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

The home provides therapeutic care, accommodation with education and outdoor activities for up to eight young people aged 10 to 17-years-old. The home is situated in a rural location but within easy reach of essential services and amenities. There is also easy access to major towns and cities.

### Overall effectiveness

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

The home is successfully providing personalised, well planned care. Managers and staff know young people's individual needs well and take good account of them as they plan day-to-day and for the longer term. They are promoting good outcomes for young people, particularly in respect of their education and appropriate contacts with family and peers. Young people are positive about living in the home and have developed trusting and supportive relationships with staff that help them to develop a positive self view. Young people benefit from a safe environment where their welfare and safeguarding needs are well balanced. They can also progress by taking planned and reasonable risks. Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. A number of minor shortfalls relating to several of the national minimum standards do not have a significant negative impact upon the outcomes for young people. They are raised to enhance practice still further at key times for 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
26 (2001)	ensure that each of the matters in Schedule 2 is available in relation to any person who, in the course of their duties, has regular contact with young people accommodated in the home. This relates specifically to students working in the home. (Regulation 26 (1)(2) and (3))	30/06/2011

## Recommendations

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

- ensure that there is a written record of all medication and treatment; that records of disposal dates are kept; and that young people who wish to keep and take their own medication, can do so safely (NMS 6.14 and 6.15)
- ensure that the policy about how electronic bedroom doors are used is always clearly informed to young people, and includes how young people will be protected from potential abuse of such measures (NMS 10.5)
- ensure that the children's guide gives young people information about how they can contact their Independent Reviewing Officer and the Children's Rights Director (NMS 13.5)
- provide a written development plan, reviewed annually, for the future of the home, identifying any planned changes to the operation or resources of the service, or confirming the continuation of the home's current operation and resource (NMS 15.2)
- ensure that managers and staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities so that they can meet children's emotional and behavioural needs effectively and consistently (NMS 21.4 and 2.3)
- ensure that young people are actively encouraged to access their files, including placement plans, and to correct errors and add personal statements (NMS 22.5)
- ensure that the records of staff recruitment and vetting checks show who carried out each check, including Criminal Records Bureau checks. (NMS 16.4)

## Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are making good progress with their self confidence and are pleased to talk about their recent sporting and academic achievements. Their special things and high quality photographs of them adorn the walls and provide an atmosphere where every young person feels valued and at home. Consistent care and regular access to therapeutic support from staff, therapists, teachers and managers is paying dividends as young people are gaining emotional resilience and an understanding of their individual situation.

Young people undertake regular education on site and are achieving very well in relation to their starting points. There is a long standing history of academic and career success for a number of young people at the home. Young people are in good routines and are able to undertake a number of household tasks alongside caring staff. This allows them to earn money and also to learn valuable self-help and independence skills. Leisure time is well planned by young people in conjunction with their key workers. There is a good mix of evening and weekend activities undertaken in the local area as well as both individual and group outings. Young people earn trust and free time to socialise with local friends. This benefits young people's health too as they undertake active sports and leisure, such as mountain biking, alongside staff and managers. Many young people are taking increasing responsibility for their own health, choosing healthy food options, taking regular exercise and responsibly using medications.

Young people enjoy good opportunities to have contact with family, friends and other people who are important to them. Electronic and phone contact is promoted within the context of individual safeguards and risk assessments which are appropriately balanced. Staff work diligently alongside placing authorities and families to make arrangements and support young people practically and emotionally with contact. Staff organise and/or provide transport and supervise contact in various distant locations. Visits to home towns are also conducted to help young people consolidate and make sense of past experiences as part of their life story and therapeutic work.

## Quality of care

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

Overall, young people enjoy very positive and constructive relationships with staff who are committed, consistent, long-standing at this home and well-qualified. Skilled and experienced people lead each shift and young people know who is looking after them. Shifts and office routines are designed so that there are good quality handovers between shifts, enabling staff to provide consistency and understand each young person's current individual situation. Staff and managers spend as much time as possible alongside young people, including good levels of individual and key working time. Meals and snacks are taken together with staff, as are regular young people's meetings. All this helps young people to feel that their views, wishes and feelings are sought and that they do have an influence on the running of the home.

Young people know how to raise informal and formal complaints and records show that they are usually satisfied with the way that things have been resolved. Young people have good access to their social workers and advocates and are helped by staff to understand when it is not possible to act upon their wishes in all instances. A good quality young people's guide is used with new young people coming into residence and is explained clearly to them. However, this document does not currently provide young people with information about how to contact their Independent Reviewing Officer or the Children's Rights Director.

Young people are cared for in line with their individual placement plan. The home plays a key role in contributing to the ongoing development of appropriate plans for young people and charts their progress in all areas. Staff also ensure that meetings and reviews concerning matters such as health, education and contact take place regularly. Staff help young people to prepare and take part in meetings about themselves. They also try to include them in signing and commenting on records and agreements made about them, including behaviour incidents. However, some young people are reluctant to engage in looking at their files and the complexity and detail of some documents makes them hard for young people to easily relate to. This slightly holds some young people back in making a positive contribution to their own goals and planning.

The home is in a rural location and provides access to outdoor activities previously unknown to many young people who come here. There are also some nearby urban locations. Young people can therefore take part in youth clubs and sports clubs as well as accessing good shops, general leisure, and beauty facilities. There is an effective balance of free time and organised activities which are positively building young people's sense of individuality as well as promoting their inclusion in healthy and community activities. The home itself is warm, welcoming and very well maintained, indoors and out. Young people benefit from a homely atmosphere and good quality furniture and standards of decoration. They are actively involved in personalising the space, for example, decorating their games room and creating all the wall art in it. They are also helped to personalise their bedrooms and bathrooms and to take responsibility for the good care of their environment.

### **Safeguarding children and young people**

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





Young people say that they feel safe here. There are clear behaviour boundaries and routines. There are personal reward programmes for each young person which reflect particular areas where they need to focus or develop. Rewards are positive, including monies, free time and special outings. Consequences of incidents of unwanted behaviour are fair and proportionate and usually last for short periods, with frequent opportunities to make good early. Such systems are effective overall in helping young people to behave well and safely. As a result, restraints are rare and very much a last resort.

Young people are well protected from significant harm, including abuse, exploitation and accident. Staff and managers advise and teach young people about relationships with peers and adults and provide them with clear messages about how to stay safe. If allegations of abuse are received, they are acted upon comprehensively and in proper conjunction with designated child protection police and local authority personnel. Young people rarely go missing and if they do, they return quickly. Positive work is done to help prevent re-occurrences.

The environment is physically safe and appropriately secure. Windows have restrictors on them and the front door is kept locked but able to be opened from inside, should there be an emergency. There are no waking night staff, but sleeping-in staff are able to hear discreet bedroom door alarms which are activated to work at night. Young people understand the welfare reasons for these and it is explained in the young persons' guide to the home. However, the written policy does not include how young people are protected from the possibility of misuse of door alarms as a welfare measure. There is no evidence of malpractice in this area, therefore the impact of the shortfall is negligible.

Young people are increasingly able to keep themselves safe, taking measured risks associated with free time in the community. They are becoming competent to manage money and use public transport safely. They are helped to conduct safe and appropriate sexual relationships and to use internet and social networking responsibly, with varying levels of supervision. If things do not go well and young people are putting themselves at risk, some freedoms are temporarily withheld until trust can be earned back. Young people are also learning to safely take care of their own health and to administer their own homely remedies as appropriate. However, the home is not keeping a record of such items or their administration, storage and disposal details. This compromises the otherwise robust medication system run from the office.

Staff and students working in the home are carefully selected and vetted. The system for this is robust and records provide evidence of what checks have been done and when. However, records do not detail who has undertaken each of the checks, including Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks. This has no impact at present, but makes it difficult to track suitability decisions retrospectively and ensure that only CRB checks initiated by the home or Ofsted are accepted. In addition, there is no record available on the premises to demonstrate the suitability checks of students currently working in the home. Nevertheless, these have been seen.

Identification of staff, visitors and students is always checked and logged upon arrival for work at the home.

## **Leadership and management**

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

Overall, the home is very effectively and efficiently managed. Staff understand and operate the home's policies and procedures consistently. They make prompt and appropriate recordings in the home's and individual young people's files. They have time to discuss young people's present needs and plans thoroughly to facilitate good standards of care. They support and guide one another well day-to-day and receive professional supervision and appraisal. However, on the first day of the inspection there was lack of clarity about young people's free time activities and the impact of agreed current consequences and sanctions. This was because managers had made changes to these and not communicated them clearly to the next staff shift. As a result, anxieties and tensions were raised for both young people and staff as they struggled to ensure consistency when young people wanted monies to go out and to catch buses. There were continuing issues with young people's behaviour that evening.

There are a good number of staff and managers to ensure high standards. There is a pool of relief staff to support the core group. Young people receive consistency as a result. The management structure is being reduced following a period of lower occupancy, but arrangements exist to ensure deputising in the absence of the manager by existing suitable staff. There is an ongoing programme of training being accessed by staff to keep their core skills refreshed. All staff use the secure office appropriately to assure confidentiality for young people's information. They effectively balance this with being available to young people as soon as they knock on the door to meet their daily needs arising in the house.

Leaders and managers work closely together with one another and with all staff. They are all able to articulate the home's strengths and morale is good. They have acted promptly and satisfactorily on the matters arising at the last inspection. Monitoring of the home and records is regular and effective in keeping standards of procedure and recording high. Messages arising from monitoring trends and patterns are communicated to everyone in memos and staff meetings. However, there is no overview plan for the future of the home available for inspection.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.