

## Inspection report for children's home

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<b>Inspector</b>	Paula Lahey
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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 care and accommodation for up to five young people aged 11 years to under 18 years, who may have emotional and behavioural issues. Some young people may also have specific learning disabilities; in particular, those on the autistic spectrum.

This large home is on the edge of a rural village, but within easy driving distance of a small town. The house is discretely divided into two areas, but retains its homely character. Young people are accommodated in the part of the home that best meets their needs.

There are extensive gardens and a number of outbuildings. These provide a school, small gym, workshop facilities and company offices. The school has undergone considerable construction work to provide additional space and facilities.

### Overall effectiveness

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

The team work positively with young people to develop strong supportive relationships. There are good systems in place to protect and promote young people's health, welfare and emotional well-being. Young people say that they feel safe and supported at the home. Staffing levels are good and the team work well together which has a positive impact on young people.

A particular strength of the service is the commitment to young people's educational and leisure development. This has resulted in young people who recognise the importance of education, value learning opportunities and know what they want to do with their futures. Young people develop self-esteem and a confidence in their abilities. This in turn has contributed to them wanting to take more age appropriate risks, develop more skills for adulthood and a desire to take greater responsibility over their lives. Recommendations have been made to ensure that young people are supported to enable this growth.

Areas for the home to develop further include; ensuring that policies, records and direct practice on the use of searches, restraint and sanctions are clear and fully compliant with current guidance and legislation. Monitoring systems needs to be developed to ensure that there is effective evaluation and challenge in order to identify the homes strengths and areas for improvement.

### 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 a written record is made of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline. This relates in particular to searches carried out of a child, their possessions or their room (Regulation 17 (b))	01/07/2011
17B (2001)	ensure that the registered person prepares and implements a written policy which sets out the measures of control, restraint and discipline which may be used in the home. This relates in particular to searches of a child, their possessions and their room. (Regulation 17 (b))	01/07/2011

## Recommendations

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

- ensure that the home only carries out searches of a child, their room or their possessions in accordance with the home's guidance (NMS 3.20)
- ensure that where any sanctions, disciplinary measures or restraint are used, children are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records kept by the home (NMS 3.18)
- ensure that children are supported to take appropriate risks as a normal part of growing up. This relates in particular to ensuring the household strategies do not limit experiential learning opportunities (NMS 4.4)
- ensure that the care children receive helps them to prepare for and supports them into adulthood. In particular this relates to developing further children's skills with handling and managing money, learning how to take responsibility for their own medication and increasing opportunities to budget and cook for themselves (NMS 12)
- ensure that restraint is not used to force compliance with instructions where significant harm or serious damage to property are not otherwise likely (NMS 3.14)
- ensure that the monitoring of the home is in line with the regulations in order to ensure compliance with the home's policies, to identify patterns and trends and contribute to improving the quality of care provided. (NMS 21)



## Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people receive a full and individually tailored educational package as the provider is incredibly committed to ensuring this is in place. This is delivered both within the providers own school and if appropriate, within mainstream educational settings. There is a high expectation for young people to develop a positive view of learning and to achieve recognised qualifications. Young people are not only attending but are making exceptional progress with their educational attainment. In addition to functional skills, additional qualifications are being offered such as vocational courses, work experience and forest school. It is evident that achievements made in education have developed young people's self-esteem and confidence in their abilities.

Young people are expected to pursue an interest outside of the home. This engages them in an activity and provides an opportunity to socialise with other young people in the community. The staff are very supportive of such activities and ensure that young people have the correct equipment, clothing and transport to participate regularly. Young people reported that they enjoy and appreciate the opportunity to do activities such as surfing, quad biking, swimming, rock climbing, and cycling. This development of individual hobbies and skills has positive outcomes. For example, one young person has been enabled to attend photography courses resulting in recognised qualifications and being able to sell some of his work, another young person has decided on a future career based on his involvement in some activities.

Staff promote an extremely healthy lifestyle and young people are encouraged to learn how to ensure that they have a balanced and nutritious diet and are supported to be active and take regular exercise.

Young people are supported to develop appropriate contact with family, friends and those who are important to them. Despite the involvement of the staff team some young people continue to find this difficult and this has resulted in restrictions being placed on contact arrangements. Any restrictions imposed are subject to full consent of all parties involved and are regularly reviewed.

All young people are supported to develop basic skills for daily living which in turn lead to a greater involvement in the upkeep of the home and accountability for their own daily responsibilities. Young people talk about now being able to make their own breakfast, doing the dishes, keeping their rooms tidy, prepare packed lunches, and on a weekly basis cook meals for themselves. Young people state that they would like to learn more skills for independence in order to more fully prepare them for becoming an adult. Examples given include; managing their own medication, having greater autonomy with what they spend pocket money on and also being responsible for the safe keeping of their weekly allowance. This degree of self-reflection and desire for increased responsibility demonstrates the home's success in developing young people's self-esteem and confidence in their capabilities.

## Quality of care

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



The involvement of young people in the home is good. They contribute to the recruitment of new staff by meeting potential candidates and providing feedback on their performance, attend monthly meetings with residential and education staff and managers in order to discuss the running of the home and are encouraged to take full part in any review of their placement. Although detailed minutes of the meetings with the residents are not maintained young people report that staff have acted on requests raised during these meetings. These include; wishes to change bedrooms, provide different activities and have a new key worker. Managers have recognised the importance of involving young people in the review of their placement plans and a new system has been devised to ensure young people are supported to do this.

This service is committed to ensuring young people can access education. The provider has a school on site where some young people attend and others go to local mainstream colleges. Residential staff are available throughout the day to support individual education needs as required. Young people are encouraged to view education and their attainments as beneficial for them. They speak positively about their school experiences.

Young people receive excellent support to meet their health needs both from within the organisation and from outside agencies. Young people regularly visit their doctor, dentist and optician and details of each of these are recorded on their personal files. Health plans clearly identify specific needs and are updated as necessary. Medication administration and storage systems are robust and safely managed. Currently all medicine's are administered by the staff team, however, young people state that they would like to take more responsibility for managing their own medication.

Young people enjoy constructive relationships with members of staff. They report that the time they spend with key workers is good and it is also evident that young people feel able to share concerns and seek support from many members of the team including senior managers.

Young people are encouraged to develop socially acceptable behaviour in an environment where negative behaviours are appropriately challenged and deflected, and positive behaviours are recognised and rewarded. By achieving daily targets; such as arriving at school on time, cooperating, and not swearing young people can achieve monetary rewards forming the basis of weekly allowances. In addition, there is also a 'golden ticket' system which allows staff to reward young people for behaving exceptionally well or being kind to others. Golden tickets can be exchanged for special privileges and rewards. Sanctions are used to assist young people to take accountability for challenging behaviour. Records are maintained but they do not consistently detail the views of young people on the sanction or the effectiveness of it. Guidance from other professionals is sought as required. Staff report that the training and advice from the clinical psychologist has enabled them to more effectively understand young people's needs and cope with adverse situations better.

The home's expectations, rules, and routines provide young people with clear boundaries and a structured and stable environment. However, some of the 'household strategies' employed limit the opportunity for young people to take age

appropriate risks and to learn from mistakes. Although young people say they understand that the rules are there to keep them safe and healthy they feel that there are too many and that some of them inhibit their independence.

The property is set in its own grounds in a rural location. Staff ensure that young people can access local towns and activities through the use of company vehicles. Young people who have approved free time have been supported to learn local bus routes and use this service to travel independently to and from education.

The house is maintained to a good standard, being clean, tidy and comfortable. It is also well furnished and in good decorative order. Young people are provided with good communal facilities to meet their individual and collective needs. Young people are able to personalise their bedrooms to their own tastes reflecting their interests and preferences. The kitchen and dining room is at the heart of the home and offers a welcoming place to sit and chat. Mealtimes are well managed, orderly and social occasions where young people and staff enjoy warm relationships. Discussions between young people and staff are lively and full of laughter.

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

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

There is a good approach to safeguarding; the providers, managers, and staff team are fully committed to ensuring that young people are protected, feel secure, and are kept safe. All the young people reported in a survey that they always feel safe at the home. Discussion with young people and placing authorities further confirmed these comments.

High staffing levels provide good supervision to engage with young people with the aim of negating the need for young people to go missing. There have been a few incidents where young people have chosen to go missing. Staff respond appropriately to all absences including searching for young people and working closely with the police and other agencies to ensure the safe return of young people at the earliest opportunity.

Comprehensive risk assessments identify likely risky behaviours and how they can be reduced or eliminated. These documents link to individual placement plans that are of good quality and subject to regular review.

The use of physical intervention leading to restraint is not very often, indicating that staff are successful in utilising their skills in de-escalating and diffusing incidents of challenging behaviour. Incidents involving restraint are generally well recorded although some records were insufficiently detailed to determine the degree of restrictive practice used within an incident. Subsequently this means that records indicate that physical intervention has been used to force compliance with instruction. Generally young people feel that staff follow the rules regarding physical intervention however there was a report of a hands on approach being used when carrying out searches of young people. The use of this practice is not detailed within the home's statement on carrying out searches and incidents are not being consistently recorded. This leaves young people and staff vulnerable and is difficult for managers to fully review any patterns or trends.

There is a robust and proactive response to any incidence of bullying and this is fully understood by young people and supported by staff and managers. Use of specialised software has enabled a young person who was being bullied within the community to use a traffic light system to alert staff of concerns and support him to devise his own strategies for keeping safe. Young people speak positively of how well supported they felt by the home during this time.

Recruitment and selection processes within the company are robust; they are completed to a high standard to make sure that only suitable people are employed to work within the home. Young people are involved in staff selection and together with staff provide feedback on prospective staff performance.

Young people live in a home that provides physical safety and security. There are no major hazards to compromise welfare. Fire safety and health and safety checks are carried out at the required intervals. The home has established systems in place and structures to maintain safe practices and fulfil health and safety obligations.

Management ensures that all allegations or suspicions of harm are promptly referred

to protect young people. The home maintains an open and supportive dialogue with young people and their respective placing authorities. A copy of the Local Safeguarding Children Board policies and procedures together with their contact details are readily available to staff. Staff receive appropriate training that focuses on the protection of young people.

### **Leadership and management**

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

The Statement of Purpose clearly outlines the aims and objectives of the home. It also describes the level of service young people can expect to receive and how they will be cared for. This information is readily available to all interested parties. A young people's guide is also produced which provides them with information they need to know about the home. This information is available to young people prior to their admission to the home.

The home is well resourced to ensure young people have good staffing ratios, access to purposeful activities and leisure interests, and a pleasant environment equipped with modern appliances and furniture.

The team display a commitment to keeping young people safe, developing positive relations, and improving young people's life chances. The manager is experienced and knowledgeable and it is clear that young people and the staff team have a particularly strong and effective relationship with her. Staff work well together and moral is high which impacts positively on young people. Managers work in conjunction with other professionals and seek the views of others concerned with the care of young people placed.

There are various systems in place to audit the items set out within the regulations, including monthly visits from a designated person and monitoring by the house supervisor. Although reports produced are individualised to each young person, and information is documented to record monitoring of items listed in Schedule 6, there is limited evidence that the information gathered is fully challenged and scrutinised in order to improve the quality of care provided.

Managers have developed an internal improvement plan that is up to date and regularly reviewed. An area identified for further development is the involvement of young people in reviewing and documenting their placement plans. Managers have started this process and although in its infancy, young people report that this is helping them to understand the reasons for their placement.

Staff undertake a detailed induction, regulatory and service specific training which provides them with skills, knowledge and competencies required to meet the needs of the young people. The organisation demonstrates a commitment to qualifications and training. Staff receive regular supervision and team meetings, this enables them to reflect on their practice and relationships with the young people.

Young people receive individualised support and attention from staff. High staffing ratios and effective shift management ensure a good balance of male and female support and enable young people to receive regular one-to-one work and key working sessions. Newly employed staff are partnered with experienced core staff members in order to ensure an effective and ongoing development programme.

The home's office is well organised with an effectively indexed system for storing information. Information is kept up to date and professional recording are made. Records are held securely in a locked office.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.