

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Deirdra Keating
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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 is owned by a private organisation and provides placements for children on behalf of local authorities. The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up-to-three young people of either gender. The home offers care and accommodation for young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people receive care which is personalised and planned in detail to promote the best support for each individual young person. Young people settle well and make good progress at the home. Young people clearly recognise the benefits of living in the home and talk positively about the service. The relationships between staff and young people are good and this has helped young people develop safe behaviours and feel secure.

The manager is aware of areas for improvement and has made many changes to the service. There are areas for development including the exterior appearance of the house but this has little impact on outcomes for young people.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure restrictions for one child do not impose similar restrictions on other children (NMS 10.4)
- ensure that the maintenance and design of the home continues to be improved and updated with particular reference to the front garden and outside of the house. (NMS 10.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make good progress with their educational attainment and are committed to daily attendance in school, college or home tutoring arrangements.

They benefit from clear routines which enable them to make the most of educational opportunities and prepare them well for the school day. Young people engage in a varied range of clubs, activities and outings which increases their confidence and develops their social skills. These are geared to their interests and include exercise classes, community clubs and a business club at the home. The business club involves young people working with staff to make jam and chutney to sell at a local market. Young people learn about working as a team and discussing ideas of how to best market their homemade foods. This has become a popular topic of conversation and has helped young people develop their culinary skills and understand the local economy.

Young people are becoming increasingly independent. They help with daily household chores, such as personal laundry and cooking evening meals for the house. Young people work with staff to develop independence plans in preparation for adult life. As part of this they use public transport and budget their daily lunch and fare allowance. Young people have used their initiative well to secure work experience in the local town. This helps broaden young people's confidence in their social skills and build a network of other people in their lives outside the home.

Some young people have regular contact and maintain significant relationships with families and other significant adults who are important to them. Telephones are provided where agreed and a separate telephone area enables them to make private calls and relax while talking to their families.

Quality of care

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

Staff maintain good relationships with young people and these are built on trust and respect. Young people highlight the manager as someone they can always approach and take their concerns to. Their views and feelings are valued by staff who provide weekly meetings as a forum for ideas and domestic issues. Staff empower young people well. Advocates have been sought for individuals and young people are confident to complain and fully understand the complaints process. Young people say that they have a say in how the home is run and also, after reflection, understand why staff cannot always act upon their wishes.

Staff engage young people in enjoyable activities both in the home and the local community. Young people are encouraged to develop healthy routines such as dance classes, going to the gym and running. Healthy lifestyles are promoted well, outdoor activity is encouraged and fresh fruit is always available. Psychological health needs are assessed and a clinical psychologist is available. This helps young people start to understand their family dynamics and the complexity of their unique backgrounds. Staff also benefit from the use of psychological support to ensure that strategies and support are planned and appropriate to young people's individual needs.

Clear care plans outline individual needs and detail times where young people may need extra guidance and support. Young people's cultural needs are outlined well in

the care plans to ensure that personal care needs can be met in line with their cultural identity and background. This has helped young people take personal pride in their appearance. Staff are proactive and resourceful, they research to find hairdressers and food outlets that meet young people's cultural needs. Staff encourage young people to cook and make meals that reflect their individual backgrounds. This has resulted in young people who eat a wide and varied range of foods from different cuisines.

The environment is comfortable, pleasant, and homely. The interior is compact but has two communal rooms which enable young people to engage in individual activities of their choice, should they wish. Young people also have access to other areas however there are some restrictions on living areas imposed at certain times due to the behaviours of others.

The home is located in a rural area with gardens and a neighbouring farm. This has meant that young people can have pets that are suitable and agreed by staff. There are currently chickens outside and feral cats arriving that will live in the garden. This truly benefits young people who say they like looking after animals and find their presence calming.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people report that they feel safe and secure. They appear to be relaxed and comfortable and their personal space and belongings are respected. Young people rarely go missing from the home, although, at times they leave the premises when this has not been agreed. Staff observe, keep young people in view and report on this clearly. Staff liaise with other professionals as and when required and young people's responses are requested on return.

Positive behaviour is promoted very well. Staff balance negative and positive consequences evenly. This helps young people understand that adherence to basic safety rules and cooperation is valued and rewarded. This has been successful the atmosphere is calm and respectful, while young people are observed as being polite and helpful.

The service has good child protection procedures in place that staff are trained well to implement. Staff are safely recruited, suitable and clear about what to do in the event of an allegation or disclosure. They recognise the personal vulnerabilities of each young person and ensure that procedures are always carefully followed to protect them from potential harm or unsafe behaviours.

The home is safe and secure, doors are locked and all visitors are checked for identity and chaperoned. The interior environment is maintained and safety checks ensure that equipment and heating systems work safely. Fire prevention equipment is in place and checked annually in addition young people are all shown how to evacuate the house safely.

Leadership and management

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

The home has been managed by an acting manager who has undergone a suitability interview for the manager's post as part of the inspection and is now the registered manager. The interim management of the home has been conducted with efficiency and a strong drive towards improvement. The manager has plans to improve the service further and complies with well legislation. Improvements since the last inspection are evident and impressive, resulting in settled placements in a house that is well maintained and homely. The interior of the house has been updated well, however, the outside of the house and front parking area are in need of attention. The manager is aware of the home's strengths and weaknesses and these have been raised as development points.

There is a balanced staff team that are supported and supervised well. Staffs' practice is monitored and records that support all procedures are checked monthly by the manager, as required. The home is monitored externally by an independent monitoring visitor. This generates reports that are detailed and objective, giving actions to promote better outcomes for young people.

Staff have some responsibility for records although this is overseen by the manager. Records are stored securely and confidentiality. Written records and care plans are of good quality and this demonstrates staff's understanding of a young person's life.

The home has good relationships with neighbours and the local community. Young people are always encouraged to attend and enjoy local events and have put on community fund raising events at the home. Local services such as community police officers have a good rapport with the service and drop in to talk to staff and support young people.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.