

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	10/01/2012
Inspector	Jim Palmer
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Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	15/06/2011
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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 progress made by the provider since the last full inspection, identifies any further strengths, any areas for improvement and makes judgements as outlined in the *Inspection of children's homes – framework for inspection (March 2011)*.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Good progress	The children's home has demonstrated continued improvement in quality of care and outcomes for children and young people and where appropriate has addressed all requirements and the large majority of recommendations that were raised at the previous inspection.
Satisfactory progress	The children's home has maintained quality of care and outcomes for children and young people and where appropriate has addressed all requirements and the majority of recommendations that were raised at the previous inspection.
Inadequate progress	The children's home has failed to address one or more requirements and/or has not met the majority of recommendations and/or the quality of care and outcomes for children and young people have declined since the last full inspection.

Service information

Brief description of the service

The home provides care and accommodation for up to five young people aged from 11 years to 17 years, who may have emotional and behavioural problems. Some young people may also have specific learning disabilities; in particular, autism.

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

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

Progress

Since their previous inspection the service is judged to be making **good** progress.

Some young people enjoy living in the home. Not all young people share that view. All, however, say that they like most staff members and thought that staff worked hard to promote their interests. Young people say that staff help them to resolve any personal matters they have.

Some young people say that they have only a limited ability to influence the house rules and consider some practices are unnecessarily restrictive. While these rules may promote young people's safety, they also inhibit their ability to take managed risks and develop greater personal responsibility.

Since the last inspection, the staff and managers have worked hard to implement the requirements and recommendations they were asked to complete.

The use of any restraint, sanction or measure of discipline is well recorded and regularly monitored by managers. This also includes any searches of young people's rooms and property. All incidents of any such practice are recorded as part of the manager's monitoring of the quality of the service, and proposed strategies are detailed in those records. The records of the use of any restraint provide a detailed description of the behaviour that led to the application of restraint. Advice to staff is clear in that they may only apply physical restraint as a last resort if there is a serious risk of harm to themselves or others.

Young people are invited and encouraged to express their comments following the use of any restraint or sanction. However, not all young people take up this opportunity. On occasions staff express the young person's view on their behalf. This is not made clear in the record and there is no evidence whether the comments

reflect the young person's view. The home is seeking ways of remedying this.

The home has reviewed all policies relating to the use of restraint, control and discipline including room searches. These policies are also repeated in the Statement of Purpose. All staff spoken to were clear about the practice guidelines and operate within them. The number of restraints and room searches has reduced since the last inspection.

Room and property searches are now conducted on a risk-led basis following discussion with placing social workers and parents, in order to keep the young person or others safe. However, some young people and staff find this can be counter productive.

Young people are supported in developing the life skills they need to make a successful transition into adulthood. The home operates as two self-contained units at either end of the building, one of which is a designated semi-independent unit. Young people who are of sufficient age and ability are encouraged to manage a weekly budget, plan a menu and shop for themselves. Some take responsibility for making personal appointments such as medical appointments and, subject to risk assessments, to manage own medication. Young people say that they receive sufficient support and guidance to provide them with the skills they need. Some young people say that their level of independence and age is not always reflected in the daily routine of the home, for example, bedtimes.

Despite this the home operates high levels of security, with internal doors between parts of the building remaining locked. Locked external doors that require a key to unlock them from the inside, as well as window restrictors, are in place on the ground floor and bedroom windows as a matter of routine. This can be overly restrictive and prevent exit from the home.

The home has made good progress in implementing the two requirements and six recommendations arising from the previous inspection and has a good track record in improving the quality of the service and using previous inspection comments as a learning experience.

Despite the progress made since the last inspection, three areas of weakness remain. Staff recruitment practice is weak in that applicants are invited to work shadow shifts prior to all required checks being completed. This may place children at risk. The home is exceeding the powers it has to keep children safe by restricting young people's liberty. The views of young people recorded in the records of restraints and sanctions, are not always easily verified as the young person's statements.

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 the registered person shall not allow a person to work in a children's home unless that person is fit to work at a children's home, namely that full and satisfactory information in respect of all matters in Schedule 2 is held. (Regulation 26(2) (3)).	31/01/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure that where any sanctions, disciplinary measures or restraint are used, children are encouraged to have their views recorded and sign the records kept by the home (NMS 3.18)
- ensure that the liberty of children is not routinely restricted and no form of secure accommodation is used unless the home is an approved secure children's home, notably by the use of internally locked doors and window restraints where there is no risk of falling, such as on ground floor windows. (Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 5 Paragraphs 2.107 and 2.109) (NMS 3.19).