

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Norma Welsby
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is part of a large national provider and is located in a rural setting. The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to two children with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

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**.

This children's home has recently been re-registered following its purchase by a national provider and this is the first full inspection. The manager and staff have made good progress in managing and assimilating the many changes that have been necessary. They acknowledge many improvements such as better training opportunities, some improvements to records and planned improvements to the physical environment, including the total refurbishment of the large farmhouse kitchen.

This is a good children's home in which young people are achieving good and sometimes outstanding outcomes, given their starting points. Staff work very well with other professionals to provide individualised care and support. Placements are relatively recent but good progress has already been made. Several professionals involved in the lives of the young people were extensively consulted during this inspection. Without exception all conveyed a very positive view of how well the placement was going. Moreover there is a really sense of a whole team approach and all shared the same high aspirations for the young people in terms of their future prospects as they mature into young adults. Comments from a social worker included: 'staff work extremely closely with me and communicate effectively' while another social worker applauded the way staff are working in a proactive way to enable the young person to develop appropriate skills and insight to live a full and healthy lifestyle in the future.

Young people living at this home have very diverse needs. Staff recognise this and provide bespoke care. Written care plans are very individualised. Staff provide a safe

and nurturing environment so that young people with complex emotional needs can achieve personal targets. For example, young people have reduced their risk taking behaviour. While some risks continue they are less in this placement than historically and staff are working proactively with other professionals to make further progress. Relationships between staff and young people are very positive. This contributes to young people's emotional, social and behavioural development. Behaviour is managed effectively, by staff having consistent and high expectations and providing meaningful incentives and rewards for young people.

At this inspection three requirements and four recommendations for improvement were made. These partly refer to improving documentation including the Statement of Purpose and young person's guide, recently revised since the change in ownership, but which are not fit for purpose.

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
4 (2001)	compile in relation to the children's home a written statement, in these regulations referred to as 'the statement of purpose' which shall consist of a statement as to the matters listed in Schedule 1. In particular ensure this document accurately reflects this service (Regulation 4 (1))	07/06/2013
4 (2001)	produce a children's guide in a form that is appropriate to the age, understanding and communication needs of the children to be accommodated in the home. In particular, ensure that the company's new, revised children's guide is acceptable to the Registered Manager and meets the diverse needs of young people in this home (Regulation 4 (4))	07/06/2013
34 (2001)	ensure the review of quality of care and the report supplied, shall provide for consultation with young people accommodated in the home, their parents and placing authorities. (Regulation 34 (3))	07/06/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure the home is well maintained and decorated, in particular attention given to upgrading young people's bathroom, replacing bedroom carpets as needed

and resolving roof leak (NMS 10.3)

- ensure young people know their rights to advocacy and how to access an advocate (NMS 1.5)
- ensure staff work effectively in partnership with other agencies concerned with child protection, in particular establishing a formal protocol of multi-agency expectations of direct supervision of young people outside of the home (NMS 4.7)
- ensure there are clear arrangements for staff to deputise in the registered manager's absence, in particular that the designated person in charge is given adequate management time off rota to fulfil such duties and is not expected to also continue working their usual pattern. (NMS 17.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Overall, considering their starting points, young people are achieving good outcomes in this placement. They have engaged well with staff and staff work enthusiastically with them as part of a multi-disciplinary team. Young people benefit from knowing that those involved in their lives share high expectations and this is helping them to develop their emotional resilience and confidence in themselves.

Young people are encouraged to live a healthy lifestyle and enjoy wholesome and nutritional food. They are given good opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills in planning healthy meals and cooking for themselves. Very good arrangements are in place for young people to access routine and specialist health appointments that address their physical, mental and emotional health needs. Health care planning is detailed and individualised and young people benefit from support from external specialist agencies. Staff support and encourage young people to attend their appointments and, where appropriate, liaise effectively to ensure good continuity of care.

Young people are achieving good outcomes in education. A very individual approach is taken which ensures that diverse needs are addressed. Considering individual starting points and the disruption to education that their individual circumstances has caused, good progress is being made and good focus given to areas of priority. For example as young people prepare for post sixteen education, specialist support is accessed including careers advice and direct assistance to source and apply for suitable college placements. This input, at a key stage in their lives, benefits young people by supporting them to make informed choices about the options open to them as they move towards this important educational transition.

Young people confirm that they are consulted about life in the home, including meals, routines, activities and décor. They take part in regular house meetings and one-to-one keyworker sessions. Young people confirmed that they feel listened to and that their views are respected. They feel that they can talk to staff and can make

a positive contribution. Contact with family and friends, in a variety of formats, is encouraged and supported by staff where appropriate. This helps young people improve their understanding of their background. They are also learning how to maintain healthy relationships and attachments. Young people also benefit from staff supporting appropriate new friendships and relationships. Staff acknowledge and support the changing needs of young people as they develop into young adults. However, not all young people have access to an independent advocate. This is important especially where family contact is limited, or if the young person cannot always express themselves in an appropriate and mature way.

Risk taking and unacceptable behaviour has reduced during this placement. While there is further progress to be made, consultation with a wide range of professionals involved in the life of the young people, confirmed that since being in this placement real progress had been made and further potential is envisaged. Young people are engaged in positive activities, including socialising with friends and enjoying existing and new interests such as dance and having meals out. Also, young people are starting to make mature decisions about their welfare and how to keep themselves safe. A key objective that everyone is working towards is to enable young people to make consistently good decisions and lifestyle choices.

Good attention is given to effective preparation for a successful transition. Depending on age and maturity young people work towards developing their confidence and skills in important areas such as using public transport, saving and budgeting, planning and preparing healthy meals and other domestic skills. Young people are well motivated and acknowledge the benefit of acquiring and practicing these skills while living in a safe and nurturing environment.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from good quality care. The staff team are highly motivated and work consistently with young people. All observations confirmed that staff are caring and nurturing in their approach and have established a really good rapport with young people. Social workers who have young people placed at the home were complimentary about the way staff are committed to young people and work effectively towards enabling young people to make real progress in their social skills, behaviour and educational prospects.

Staff have worked hard to establish constructive relationships and a positive rapport with young people. While young people do not have a lot in common, staff work effectively to meet their differing needs and to instil tolerance and respect for each other. Young people confirm that they have their views sought regularly. They are aware of how to make a complaint and have done so in the past. Such complaints have been responded to positively and correct procedures followed by staff. Staff also help young people to develop insight and tolerance by explaining why on occasions it is not possible to act upon their wishes. An example of this was observed during the inspection and a happy compromise was reached which left the young

person feeling valued and empowered but also accepting that compromise is a mature approach that still achieves reasonable outcomes.

Young people have very detailed placement plans. Regular review meetings are held and young people are encouraged to attend or at least have their views represented. Since the recent change in ownership lots of documentation has changed and some, such as the new presenting behaviour risk management plan, are more focused and individualised.

Staff give good attention to supporting school attendance and educational achievement. They liaise effectively with schools and personal tutors and have good insight into the goals and aspirations of young people. Within the home, staff facilitate additional learning opportunities through regular one-to-one sessions and themed equality and diversity topics. Staff also encourage young people to enjoy a range of purposeful activities and pursue hobbies so that they develop healthy lifestyles and friendship groups.

The home provides an appropriate and healthy environment. Its location, being very rural, is a deciding factor in a young person's placement, which may be due to previous concerns associated with living in a more urban area. As well as extensive gardens and the potential for a former allotment to be re-established, from the home young people can enjoy walks across open fields to the estuary where they often collect driftwood to make house and garden features. Young people have access to a house car plus the equal share of a second car with a neighbouring home. Despite its rural location, beyond the immediate vicinity there is a very good range of community facilities that young people regularly use including transport links, shopping facilities, cinema, ice skating rink, swimming centre and parks. Internally the home's presentation is mixed. The lounge is comfortable, contemporary and personalised with artistic contributions from young people. The large kitchen-diner was due to be totally refurbished the week following the inspection. Young people's bedrooms are spacious and personalised, although one is in need of a new carpet. However the bathroom is poorly presented and when young people use the shower, which is over the bath, this can cause a leak through to the hall ceiling. Other aspects of the home are also in need of attention including the main roof which it is understood leaks during torrential rain.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people confirmed that they feel safe and well cared for at this setting. They acknowledge that while they may not always agree with decisions made that restricts their choices they understand that staff and other professionals have their best interests at heart.

Staff have an excellent recognition of the vulnerabilities and diverse needs of individual young people. Young people's care plans clearly identify individual risks and proactive measures required to minimise these. Staff work closely with other

professionals to ensure the safety and well-being of young people. However, a formal protocol is not in place in respect of multi-agency expectations of direct supervision of young people outside of the home. This is important in order to protect staff and to be clear about expectations of their actions should an emergency arise. Safeguarding of young people is a priority and all staff receive formal training so they know what to do and who to contact in the event of a child protection issue.

Staff consistently provide clear boundaries so that young people know how they are expected to behave. There is an effective system of sanctions and rewards in place. Physical intervention is very much a last resort and overall is used minimally. When used, restraints are at the lowest level possible to keep young people safe. Subsequently, in keeping with good practice, events are thoroughly examined to ensure lessons are learnt and action taken to keep young people safe. For example following a serious incident six months ago a full review led to an increase in staffing which following a further review has only just reverted to the original ratio.

Children are protected by vetting of visitors to the home and a visitors' book is maintained to keep a record of those entering the home. The recruitment process is robust. Recruitment records are maintained in the organisation's central office and a summary is kept in the home. These practices help to protect young people from adults who may seek to do them harm

The home has good safety measures in place and is physically safe and secure. All health and safety risk assessments and checks on the environment are in place. A fire risk assessment is in place as well as fire detection systems. Young people and staff practise evacuations so that they know what to do in an emergency. This ensures that young people live in a safe environment which supports their health and development.

Leadership and management

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

The home is managed by a competent and experienced Registered Manager and staff spoke very well of the improvements that have occurred since he was appointed 18 months ago. The manager exercises strong and effective leadership and is respected by staff and young people alike.

The staffing levels of the home meet the needs of current young people. Flexible arrangements are in place to respond to the changing needs of young people. There is good staff retention and currently no vacancies exist. While deputising arrangements are in place during the manager's absence, these do not allow the person deputising to work off rota. This shortfall means that during the absence of the manager standards may slip as the deputy is not allocated management time to fulfil his responsibilities.

Staff are up-to-date with their mandatory training and a good system is in place to ensure refresher training is completed in a timely way. With the exception of one member of staff, who is still on the six month probationary period, all have at least a level 3 or equivalent qualification in child care, while the manager is part way through a level 5 diploma in leadership for children and young people's services (residential management). Without exception staff speak very well of the management of the home and feel they benefit from good training opportunities, regular staff meetings, supervision and annual appraisal.

Despite the good management of this home, this outcome area has been rated adequate. This is due to the wider considerations that have influenced the judgement. For example a significant shortfall is in the quality the recently produced Statement of Purpose, which although lengthy does not fully include all the required information, is difficult to read and is misleading and does not properly reflect the individuality of this home. Similarly the young person's guide is very lengthy and does not fully reflect the individuality of the home, nor is it suitable to meet a diverse range of young people's needs.

A development plan is in place and the manager and staff have a commitment to compliance and clearly demonstrate their motivation for continuous improvement. While quality monitoring processes, including Regulation 33 visits and Regulation 34 review of quality, are thorough and contribute along with the development plan to such improvements, specifically the manager's review of quality does not adequately evidence that appropriate consultation has taken place or demonstrate how the outcome of such consultation has helped inform further improvements.

At the last inspection held in September 2012, one requirement and one recommendation was made. Both have been addressed. This means that young people now have access to the internet, although a more permanent solution is also planned. Also, continued improvements to the physical environment have taken place. However, as this is an old and extensive property on going attention is needed to maintain a homely, attractive and child-friendly environment.

The home keeps very good records that are well organised and stored securely.

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 the inspection of children's homes.