

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Amanda Ellis
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home provides care for up to four young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. It provides medium to long-term residential care and is owned by a private company.

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**.

Young people experience a good quality of care in this home because effective management and staff teams ensure high standards are maintained and young people's needs fully met. Quality of care is outstanding. As a result, outcomes for young people are significantly improved.

Safeguarding practices are sound and young people learn how to keep themselves safe. Examples include reductions in incidents of young people going missing from home and significant improvements in young people better managing challenging and risk-taking behaviours. Young people are taught to keep themselves safe and say they feel safe.

Young people are involved in planning and reviewing their care. Care planning takes into account their views and diverse needs.

Relationships between young people and staff are excellent because young people receive support from an experienced, skilled and committed staff team. Young people are positive about the home, staff, manager and quality of care. One young person said, 'The staff are lovely, you can talk to them about anything.'

Leadership and management arrangements for this home are good. Internal and external monitoring processes provide continuous quality assurance which maintains standards of care, whilst promoting the continuous development of this service.

Shortfalls identified at this inspection are in relation to minor maintenance of damage to décor and furnishings and the external front area and a recommendation is set.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure the home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well maintained and decorated, specifically relating to the maintenance of damage to a bedroom and ensuring that the exterior to the home is kept tidy. (NMS 10.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make good progress and develop positively within this home. They develop positive attachments and are able to form relationships with carers. Consistency in care and boundary setting further ensure young people benefit from stability of care. This results in more positive and productive behaviour.

Young people progress in education in relation to their starting points. Attendance is supported and consistent. Young people benefit from an integrated school and therapeutic service and the strong and effective links staff have with local colleges. Effective communication between home and education staff ensures young people enjoy cohesive care.

Young people receive health care appropriate to their individual needs to ensure they achieve good health outcomes. Their health needs are met because the staff work alongside a range of health care professionals. Young people benefit from a healthy lifestyle promoted by a skilled and knowledgeable staff team.

Young people receive effective support to maintain contact with family members and those of significance in their lives. The staff team have detailed knowledge of individual circumstances. They collaborate with professionals and families to promote positive contact in line with arrangements agreed in individual care plans.

Young people develop independence skills through a routine daily element in the home. They undertake a range of activities, according to their age and ability, to prepare them for independent living. The acquisition of such life skills provides young people with improved outcomes when living independently.

Quality of care

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

Young people receive an outstanding quality of care at the home. A key strength of the home is the relationships which the staff develop with the young people. Young people are enthusiastic in their praise of the staff team. Positive and nurturing relationships enable young people to thrive.

Young people are cared for by the provider's inclusive education, social care and therapeutic staff. Highly effective partnerships with external agencies and social work services are also evident. One social worker commented, 'I am very happy with the care provided, the home has given stability and are fully involved in the planning for their long term care.'

Young people's views influence the quality of their care and they make a positive contribution to the running of the home. Weekly meetings and a young person's suggestion box provide opportunities to express views and opinions. Monthly meetings with the manager and regular key work sessions further enable them to contribute to decisions about their care. Consequently management ensure the views of young people are reflected in the running of the home.

Young people receive a comprehensive guide which contains information on their care, advocacy, contacts and details for contacting Ofsted. Young people know how to make a complaint to staff and outside agencies. The complaints procedure is on the notice board in an appropriate format and young people provided with complaints forms, pens and pre-stamped and addressed envelopes. Young people say that they feel listened to and that their views taken into consideration.

Care planning, risk assessments and behaviour management plans are comprehensive, detailed and up to date. Regular and consistent reviews of plans and progress, alongside rigorous auditing ensure clarity for staff to provide highly effective support to children. Where shortfalls are identified in partner agencies, the staff are proactive in pursuing these to ensure the needs of young people are fully met.

Young people live in an environment which promotes their holistic health and well-being. Effective working relationships with health service providers ensure young people's individual needs receive consistent support. The home's own therapeutic service provides therapeutic support to each young person. Young people have healthy lifestyles with freshly cooked meals and participation in physical activities. This means young people benefit from comprehensive health care which promotes good health.

The provider's primary and secondary schools are registered with Ofsted. Education has a high priority in this home. Those young people who require alternative education provision receive active staff support to obtain suitable educational placements. Young people attend and are supported to achieve in school. Staff are proud of the progression made by young people. Young people express that they enjoy attending school and are proud of their achievements and improvements in behaviour. Young people develop skills, confidence and knowledge through participation in education. This provides a strong foundation for transitions to further

education and vocational training.

Young people actively engage in a range of activities. Young people are provided with choice to participate in age-related activities, days out and social events. The range of pursuits enables young people to explore their talents, develop skills and thereby build confidence and self-esteem.

The home's environment is undergoing internal redecoration. Despite this the home remains inviting, comfortable and homely, with furniture of a good standard. Young people have chosen the décor of their bedrooms and the lounge area.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people live in a safe, secure and stable environment. Levels of safety are good because staff implement the robust and regularly reviewed policies and procedures. Staff are well trained in safeguarding, behaviour management and health and safety. They implement clear and structured strategies to safeguard young people and manage their behaviour. Young people say they feel safe, secure and see improvements in their behaviour.

Young people are protected if they are absent from the home. The home has good protocols and procedures to follow should young people go missing, which are implemented appropriately. Staff are aware of triggers which lead to young people going missing. They work with young people to address these issues upon their return to the home and in key work sessions. Risks are minimised through staff awareness of factors which lead to young people going missing. Incidents of young people missing from the home have reduced. One parent described their child as, 'Running away all the time...(they) are so different now. Their life is much more settled.'

Young people learn to improve behaviours because staff promote consistent rules and expectations. Staff implement behaviour plans and positively reinforce and reward positive behaviours and achievements. This means that young people are developing positive behaviour. Young people are encouraged to use free time positively, therefore diverting young people from risk-taking activities and associations. Communication processes are strong and effective. Key work records show meaningful discussion with young people about their behaviours. Behaviour improves because staff are consistent and have the skills to enable young people to progress.

Safeguarding strategies focus on robust risk assessment and there are subsequent restrictions on young people having free time. Staffing levels are appropriate to ensure that all children and young people are supervised, kept safe and receive appropriate support. Young people benefit from extensive individual risk assessments. These are reviewed and updated regularly ensuring young people are protected from harm.

There is minimal use of physical restraint in the home. Physical interventions are used as a last resort when a young person is placing themselves or others at risk. All staff who implement any restraint are suitably trained to do so. Young people learn to improve their interaction with staff and each other because of effective behaviour management practices.

Staff employed to work in the home experience a rigorous selection process prior to taking up their positions. There have been no newly recruited staff members since the last inspection. There have been changes within the home, with several staff members moving from another of the provider's homes and the addition of the current manager. However, these changes have not had a negative impact on young people.

Young people say bullying is not an issue but they know what to do if an incident occurs. Good policies and procedures are in place for countering bullying and a range of resources support proactive discussions around bullying. As a result young people are protected from bullying. There have been no allegations, no complaints and no reported incidents of bullying within the home since the last inspection.

The home has a range of risk assessments for the building, activities and equipment. Hazards are identified and clear methods of control are in place to reduce risk. Fire drills are held and fire alarm systems are checked as required. All required health and safety checks are carried out in a timely manner. As a result the building is safe, appropriately secure and young people are protected from harm.

Leadership and management

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

The leadership and management of this home are effective and efficient. The home's current acting manager has submitted an application to be registered with Ofsted. The acting manager is a knowledgeable, professional who has direct experience in working with young people with challenging behaviours.

Young people benefit from a home that has maintained good standards. No requirements or recommendations were made at the last inspection.

The home has a development plan in place which reflects practical proposals for continued improvement, with plans for improvements to the home, staff development and training. The acting manager understands the strengths and weaknesses of the home and takes action to tackle weakness and make improvements.

A key strength of the home is the commitment and dedication of the competent and well-qualified staff team. They are cohesive, dedicated and have vast experience within young people's residential care. This means that young people receive sound and safe care.

Young people benefit from effective management and monitoring of the home. Independent monitoring visits take place on a monthly basis and include discussion with young people, parents and staff. Reports of these visits are prepared and managers address any actions raised to secure improvement. The acting manager undertakes routine monitoring activities, in addition to the comprehensive independent monitoring. These combined systems ensure that young people receive a consistently good quality of care.

Staffing numbers ensure good levels of support which meet the needs of the home and the young people in placement. Low staff turnover mean young people benefit from consistency in care.

There is a comprehensive mandatory training programme in place, with additional training provided by the company and external organisations. This means staff develop their skills in working with young people and on specific issues.

Staff supervision is regular. Staff are positive about the acting manager and the quality and consistency of the support they receive. Regular team meetings ensure that the staff team communicates well, to ensure the effective exchange of information about young people's needs and circumstances.

Young people's and staff records are generally good. Records are clear, up to date and stored securely. All significant events are notified as required, with appropriate action taken to follow procedures and protect young people.

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.