

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Pamela Nuckley
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This service, operated by a private organisation, provides integrated packages of care, therapy and education for a maximum of six children with reactive attachment 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 **outstanding**.

Young people make significant progress as a result of living in this home. A senior practitioner says: 'During my visit I have found a child who has gone full circle in his emotional and physical presentation. I have the delight in witnessing the unconditional honesty and sensitivity of individual staff to meet the holistic needs of a child with emotional and behaviour difficulties.'

Highly motivated, well-trained and dedicated staff provide very individualised support to young people. Young people are central to their care and are consulted through several forums. Therefore, young people said that they can influence the care they receive and how the home operates. As a result, young people have extremely positive outcomes, such as engaging with education, managing behaviours and re-integration with families and placements.

Young people enjoy extremely positive relationships with staff which are built upon honesty and trust. Young people say: 'We can talk to staff about anything and they will do their best to sort things out.' Social workers comment upon the 'extremely supportive, professional and stable staff team', and say how well young people settle here. Staff work exceptionally well with schools, families, social workers and young people. This ensures young people continually receive the right help, support and guidance.

The Registered Manager provides strong leadership and works consistently to improve upon the quality of care and outcomes for young people. She understands the strengths and weaknesses of the home and there are clear plans for

improvement. The views of staff, parents and professionals from all disciplines are used constructively to constantly raise standards.

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Young people receive individualised support through excellent and innovative care planning. This allows them to develop an understanding and knowledge of their family and cultural background. Young people make good progress in forming a positive self-view and building emotional resilience. Young people say that they are assisted, through several forums, to have their voice heard and influence change. A social worker commented: 'Staff clearly value and respect the young people and work hard to form positive attachments and trusting relationships.' Through these, young people develop confidence in their abilities and, where appropriate, rebuild relationships with their family members and in their communities.

Attendance at school is excellent and educational achievements are celebrated. Young people display their certificates proudly and receive additional rewards for progress. One young person said: 'I went out for a meal. It was great.' Young people who have been out of education for a significant time are settled in the company school quickly and their needs are assessed swiftly. Some young people have progressed to mainstream school, which in turn has supported their introduction into foster care. Therefore, young people's educational needs are met and they are afforded the same opportunities as their peers.

Young people are generally fit and well and enjoy a range of sporting activities, such as attending a running club, football and scouts. They eat healthily and choose meals within their young people's meetings. One young person said: 'I am really healthy because I am really sporty. I go to the running club, go on bike rides and play football.' Young people are able to access an extensive range of health support agencies; as a result, they receive excellent support on a wide range of health care issues.

Young people benefit from regular and appropriate contact with their families and friends. This enables them to develop and sustain positive relationships with those people who are important to them. They look forward to spending time with them and happily regale staff with tales of what they have done. Staff work exceptionally hard to ensure young people enjoy their time with their family. They are acutely aware of young people's vulnerabilities and make sure they are effectively and sensitively supported. Young people say: 'Staff make sure we get to see our family, because they know it's important to me.' Young people enjoy the same social experiences of other young people of a similar age and ability, for example, spending time with their friends and eating out at restaurants.

An outstanding area of this home is the transition of young people into foster care. Young people receive highly individualised care that makes this transition successful. They receive weekly support from therapists, and the holistic approach in addressing

their difficulties enables them to reflect and improve. A counsellor said: 'I visit lots of children's homes but this home gives exceptional care. Young people are well cared for and they are happy here. The successful foster placements are a testament to the staff.' One young person said: 'They are family finding for me. I can't wait.' Therefore, young people understand their plan and are looking forward to their future.

Quality of care

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

Young people in the home are appropriately placed there. Young people's needs are assessed appropriately and care plans outline how these needs are met. Placement plans contain good records which are updated appropriately and include all relevant details regarding young people's needs. Staff complete records which include information about care, diet and support given to young people. Young people are consulted and contribute fully to their plans and know what they are working towards. The excellent support provided by key workers encourages young people to work through difficulties and address the key areas in their plans.

The approach to planning is excellent. There is exceptional and effective multidisciplinary working. Staff ensure they work closely with other professionals such as therapists and education. Innovative and creative strategies are developed to ensure that children make progress in every area of their lives. For example, excellent structure and routines are provided in everyday living. Irrespective of the challenges they present, young people's well-being and individual achievements are at the centre of all practice. As a result, young people work towards achievable goals and their interests are fostered and built upon. This improves young people's confidence in their abilities and improves their self-esteem.

The strong, committed staff team has consistently high aspirations for the young people in their care. They work strenuously to develop positive, constructive relationships with young people. They provide opportunities for them to share their wishes and feelings. A member of staff said: 'We actively listen to young people and ensure that they are fully involved in their care and planning. Sometimes it may not be possible to do everything they ask for but we ensure that they understand.' Young people enjoy warm, productive relationships with staff and each other, even if they are not always in agreement with the boundaries. One young person said: 'The staff are great. You can ask them anything.' Another young person said: 'Staff treat me well even after I have been misbehaving.' This effectively promotes self-esteem and feelings of self-worth. A social worker said: 'The investment that staff put into young people shows in the relationships they have.'

Young people are constantly engaged in the community, with peers and with each other, because of the excellent activity programme. Young people have hobbies such as attending Scouts, St John's Ambulance and a running club. One young person was proud to say: 'I am going on the Remembrance parade on Sunday with the Scouts.' Young people also have educational activities such as visiting museums and fun

outings to forests, the cinema and local parks. These provide young people with the opportunity for new life experiences through which they gain confidence and build friendships. As a result, young people say that they are not bored, they have fun and take their hobbies seriously.

Young people's health needs are prioritised and young people have regular access to health services specific to their needs. Health promotion is a prominent feature at the home. The physical, emotional and mental health needs of each young person are identified on admission and comprehensively supported throughout their stay. For example, excellent partnership working with health professionals means the home provides holistic care for young people. Records of appointments with health professionals are clearly maintained, ensuring the physical, emotional and mental health needs of young people are met. Medication is securely stored within the home and designated staff are trained to administer medication safely. Clear records are maintained for the administration of medication and staff are vigilant in checking medication dispensed, ensuring accurate and up-to-date records are maintained.

Young people are very aware that staff may not always be able to act upon their requests. They are aware of the complaints system should they have any concerns. They say: 'Staff go through the complaints procedure with us all the time.' Young people report that when they have raised a concern that they were satisfied with the outcome. Young people's views, wishes and feelings are of paramount importance to staff. Young people receive exceptional individualised support, which stems from staff's intuitive understanding of each young person's needs. This means they are able to provide effective guidance and reassurance to young people to help reduce any anxieties or worries they may have. Social workers say staff are very good advocates for young people and are positive parental role models.

Young people's educational needs are extremely well supported. Staff have consistently high aspirations for young people. Young people talk enthusiastically about the support they receive from staff with regards to their education. As a consequence, young people are achieving within education. One headteacher commented: 'Thanks for your continued support. It was fantastic to see the pupils in their new uniforms, pristine and keen to start the New Year. Thank you for taking school so seriously.' Young people's education is highly valued at this home. Staff ensure that young people are ready for their day, are interested in how their day went, and support young people by assisting them with homework and by celebrating any achievement or progress they make. Staff liaise with schools and attend any meeting or significant events. Thus young people feel that they are fully supported within education.

Young people live in a very comfortable and homely family house in a residential neighbourhood. It is close to shops, public transport, schools and community amenities. The house is decorated and furnished to a good standard. Young people are keen to point out how they chose various items for the lounge and feel that the colour is much more homely. Young people's bedrooms are personalised and clearly reflect their individual tastes and interests.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Safeguarding young people is paramount and central to practice. Young people report they feel safe and are supported to keep safe, within age-appropriate boundaries. Young people know staff care about them and say they talk to them about risks and making safe choices. Staff understand young people's individual needs and vulnerabilities and do all they can to protect them from abuse and harm. Staff are confident in processes to follow should they be concerned for a child's safety or welfare. They keep comprehensive logs where appropriate. Clear procedures provide a framework for the staff to act on if they need to share concerns with safeguarding agencies. Any issues that arise are robustly dealt with and investigated to the highest level. The Registered Manager considers if any changes are needed to further strengthen the robust safeguarding processes, such as bespoke training. This ensures the on-going safety of young people at the home.

Young people have clear, consistent boundaries. They know what is expected of them and what is unacceptable. They understand the home's rules and possible consequences, and say, 'the rules are fair.' Reward schemes work extremely well as they are meaningful to young people. Staff are extremely positive role models and provide high levels of appropriate praise and encouragement. The Registered Manager closely monitors all behavioural incidents in consultation with other professionals, such as therapists and placing social workers. Social workers and parents say they have excellent communication with the home and report that they are fully informed of any incidents. This means there is an immediate and robust response and all are kept as safe as possible.

Young people rarely go missing and staff are able to demonstrate how and what action they would take to keep young people safe. There are systems in place to notify the appropriate authorities of any significant events, and risk assessments completed for young people who are at risk. The home works with local police to help keep young people safe. There are specific risk assessments in place to ensure young people are safe while accessing the community. The robust policies and procedures, underpinned by training and supervision, ensure children are safe. Young people can take reasonable risks while having a strong sense of safety and well-being.

Young people are protected from bullying. Staff are vigilant with regard to relationships within the home, and high supervision levels mean that there are limited opportunities for bullying or inappropriate relationships to develop. Young people discuss bullying with staff and any issues are addressed with individuals concerned.

Young people's health and safety are protected by robust vetting of visitors to the home to prevent young people being exposed to potential abusers. No member of staff is allowed to work in the home until full checks are completed and records

confirm all visitors sign in and out of the building. This ensures their safety.

Young people's physical safety is assured by excellent health and safety procedures. Established systems are in place for the routine checking and servicing of all fire equipment and other appliances. Regular practiced evacuations ensure that young people and staff know how to leave the building safely and quickly in case of an emergency.

Leadership and management

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

A dynamic, enthusiastic and dedicated manager manages this home. She is supported by an excellent deputy and a staff team who are highly skilled, qualified and dedicated to improving outcomes for young people. Staffing is a real strength of the home, with an experienced team who are well qualified. They are enthusiastic about the work they do and are clearly very committed to the children in their care. They are described by parents and other professionals as, 'brilliant', 'committed', and, 'dedicated.' The staff group operate very effectively as a supportive team and they receive high quality supervision and training. Young people benefit from a highly motivated, enthusiastic and well-trained staff team.

Staff state that various development and training opportunities are available and this helps progress their careers. Consistently high expectations are relayed to staff through regular meetings. This improves the practice of staff and focuses their attention on meeting the needs of young people and helping them develop. As a result, young people are cared for by a staff team which is well equipped to meet their needs. The progress young people make is clearly evident.

Young people are guided through and know what services they can expect from the home, how they will be cared for and who they are likely to share with. An excellent Statement of Purpose, complemented by a comprehensive children's guide, outlines the aims and objectives of the service. The home is operating in line with these documents and the principles are understood by all interested parties, including young people.

Established systems ensure the home runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis, and up-to-date policies and procedures support and promote good practice. Regulation 33 and 34 monitoring is regularly carried out and young people are consulted during monitoring visits. The Registered Manager communicates and notifies agencies, including Ofsted, of significant information. Young people are therefore protected by multi-agency decision making. Records are securely kept, meticulously maintained and any identified shortfalls are promptly addressed. They provide an understanding of each child's life, experiences and plans for the future. Regular reviews of these clearly chart progress. This ensures high standards are maintained as well as contributing to young people's explicit sense of belonging. These measures mean that young people experience a consistent approach that is personalised to meet their individual needs.

The manager maintains a strong overview of key documents, policies and procedures in order to ensure practice is current, relevant to young people's needs and accountable. The views of young people, parents and professionals are routinely captured to continuously improve day-to-day care and promote achievement. A good development plan comprehensively outlines the aims and objectives for the year. There were no requirements or recommendations made at the last inspection and the quality of care remains consistently high.

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.