

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Valerie Shephard
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is run by a private organisation and provides care and accommodation for up to seven young people 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 **outstanding**.

The home has an exceptional impact on the outcomes achieved by children and young people. Children and young people benefit from high levels of personalised care delivered by a well-qualified and knowledgeable staff team.

Children and young people are very positive about the home and the care they receive. They are at the centre of practice and take an active part in the day-to-day running of the home. Effective consultation on all aspects of their care ensures that their individual needs are recognised and met. Relationships between children and young people and the staff team are exceptional resulting in the development of trust. Consequently children and young people are able to grow and develop emotional resilience within a safe environment.

There is excellent management and monitoring of the home and leaders fully understand the strengths and weaknesses and effectively address these. This ensures that children and young people continue to benefit from high standards of care and support. A sessional member of staff said, 'of all the homes I work in I think this is the best one.'

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Children and young people enjoy exceedingly good outcomes commensurate with their starting points in the home and effects of early experiences. They benefit from a staff team who have a thorough knowledge and understanding of child

development and attachment difficulties. Staff say that children and young people have developed, or are developing, positive attachments with members of staff. While these attachments are still tenuous in some cases, some children and young people are much better at emotionally regulating themselves. They are showing an increased ability to consider their actions in a calm and reflective manner and make positive changes. Staff say they have seen significant improvements in children and young people's capacity to communicate, negotiate, apologise and link cause and effect.

Children and young people enjoy good health and attend their appointments with primary health care professionals including therapeutic provision. Incidents of self-harm have significantly reduced, or stopped, as children and young people settle and form trusting relationships with staff. Young people have access to specialist services such as those associated with smoking cessation or sexual health to support their maturation. Children and young people are encouraged to eat a balanced diet and take exercise. The provision of wholesome meals and snacks assist children and young people to make sensible choices about what they eat. Takeaway and fast food is an occasional treat in the home. Children and young people have access to a wide range of physical activities which help to promote a healthy lifestyle. These include walking, swimming, football, skating and golf. Attendance at a local youth centre enables children and young people to socialise and enjoy an alternative range of activities.

Children and young people attend school regularly and enjoy excellent outcomes in terms of their education. Some young people have made significant progress in their learning with the provision of additional support leading up to major exams. One young person said, 'I was behind at school when I came here but staff have helped me with homework so I could catch up.' Young people have high aspirations to go to college and realise their dreams. File records indicate young people overall are doing very well in school. One young person's report states, 'a positive parents' evening with all teachers pleased with progress made.'

Children and young people are able to continue to see their families and friends. This enables them to sustain relationships and attachments with significant people and assists with the development of their identity. Sensitive support to children and young people assists them to deal with any difficulties which may arise for them during contact. Some children and young people have managed to make and sustain new friendships, something they had not been able to do previously. This has a positive effect on the development of their self-esteem and sense of well-being.

Children and young people develop skills to assist them in independence, depending on their age and stage of development. They keep their bedrooms tidy, make their beds and sort out their laundry and receive rewards accordingly for achieving these tasks. As young people mature they are able to negotiate 'free time' away from the home to see friends or go shopping. This assists them to take risks associated with normal growth and development and to bolster confidence in their abilities. Young people approaching independence are increasing their skills in cooking and shopping and learning about money management. They talk of their wish to learn to drive and

to one day have their own flat.

Quality of care

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

Children and young people benefit from excellent care provided by a knowledgeable and experienced staff team. Staff have a full and thorough understanding of the long-term effects of trauma and abuse on children and young people's self-esteem. This enables them to develop exceedingly good trusting relationships with children and young people positively effecting the development of emotional resilience. Staff adopt an extremely positive approach to care, which including lots of praise and compliments to children and young people. Comments such as 'thank you for being such good company today' assist children and young people in the development of their self-esteem.

Staff strive to ensure that all children and young people have school placements and attend regularly. For those awaiting a school placement, proactive engagement with the placing authority and education department ensures there is appropriate provision. Well-established links and liaison with schools and colleges enables children and young people to make positive progress in their learning. Staff provide excellent support such as assistance with homework or facilitating a home tutor. This ensures that children and young people get the best out of their education. Young people approaching, or having completed their end of school examinations are expected to do very well.

Consultation with children and young people takes place through a variety of ways to capture their views and effect care delivery. Children and young people say that they feel able to talk to staff and they will listen. A recent staff decision to suspend young people's meetings was as a result of listening to children and young people. They had been vocal about not wanting to meet in this way and staff have acknowledged their views on this matter. The provision of individual consultations with children and young people about all aspects of the running of the home has resolved this. It is evident that children and young people can clearly express their views. They know to make a complaint, although rarely do so as lines of communication are open and clear. One young person said, 'I can talk to staff about anything and they will listen to me.'

Children and young people have placement plans which are subject to regular review, and into which they have an input. The provision of a 'child friendly' format assists children and young people to engage in the process from the outset. Children and young people feel they are valued in the home and staff really care about them. They say that the staff in the home are very friendly, supportive, caring and keep us safe. One young person said, 'I like the structure and routines of the home, especially the regular mealtimes.'

All staff are trained in the use of 'here and now' work to help children and young people understand the present before moving on to the past. Staff are assisted in

this work by therapists commissioned by the home to offer a consultancy service. This means that staff are fully supported to undertake this delicate work. As a result children and young people learn about their backgrounds and early life experiences which assist them in their emotional development and identity.

Behaviour management plans are in place for all children and young people in the home. These are subject to regular review in consultation with the child or young person and the social worker. Behaviour management focuses on positive techniques in an endeavour to encourage children and young people to repeat desired behaviours. The provision of a 'treat' box enables them to exchange tokens, given for good behaviour, for an item from the box. This method is highly effective in encouraging children and young people to behave well. A social worker said, 'I am very impressed with the home's management of this young person.'

Children and young people benefit from living in a healthy and spacious environment which meets their physical, social and emotional needs. The layout of the home provides them with sufficient space to follow individual interests and activities.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children and young people confirm that the home provides them with a safe environment. While there have been incidents of bullying in the past, children and young people say this is not currently a problem. They say that if there was any bullying, they would tell staff immediately. The implementation of a bullying awareness campaign has addressed bullying in the home and its impact sustained through regular discussion.

Staff receive training in safeguarding and fully understand the policies and procedures to follow to ensure children and young people are safe. Effective links with the police ensure the home is aware of current initiatives in relation to risks of child sexual exploitation. Over the last few months, there has been a steady decrease in the number of children and young people going missing from home. This is a result of them feeling able to talk to staff if they have a problem.

When children or young people are not managing to regulate their emotional responses, use of restraint may be necessary. Staff receive training in restraint, but only use this to prevent a child or young person hurting themselves or others. Effective recording of restraint incidents detail the type and duration of restraint, and the effectiveness of the measure. Support is available to the child or young person after a restraint event, and medical attention sought where necessary. Staff seek to obtain the child's or young person's view of the event and an evaluation is undertaken by the manager. Where there have been peaks in the number of restraints, an analysis is usually successful in uncovering the reasons for this. Overall, the number of restraints have reduced over time.

Children and young people benefit from living in a very safe environment. Medication is safely stored and administered, and records completed effectively. The building is old, but maintained to a high standard to ensure it remains safe. The appointment of a maintenance worker has ensured that repairs to the home take place promptly. A programme of refurbishment has removed all potential hazards and regular health and safety checks ensure the home meets safety requirements. Children and young people participate in fire drills enabling them to practice the procedure to follow in the event of an evacuation. All these measures are in place to support the safety and welfare of children and young people.

Leadership and management

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

The home benefits from a Registered Manager who leads an established and stable staff team. Leadership is excellent and demonstrates a commitment to high standards within the home. The staff enjoy exceptionally good levels of support which enables them to provide high quality care to children and young people. Staff members consistently say this is the best home they have worked in. A social worker said, 'the strength of the home is the very stable staff team who work well together and respond calmly to young people.'

A wide range of training is available to staff which is evidence of the management teams committed to staff development. This provision ensures staff are up to date with practice and can continue to deliver high quality care. Training also equips staff with knowledge about child development and attachment which enables them to care effectively for children and young people.

There is robust monitoring of the home achieved by monthly visits undertaken by an independent visitor under Regulation 33. The manager ensures continual improvement in care practices by addressing actions identified by the independent visitor. A summary of reports of the Registered Manager's internal monitoring under Regulation 34 are submitted to Ofsted every six months. This enables the regulator to have oversight of the running of the home.

A requirement made at the previous inspection pertained to the home having relevant information, documents and records for each child or young person. This requirement is fully met following the implementation of new practice which ensures the placing authority provides relevant information. This demonstrates the manager's ability to continually monitor and develop practice to support improvements in the home's operation.

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.