

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Simon Morley
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is run by a private company and is registered to provide care for up to four young people of either gender. The Statement of Purpose for the home identifies the primary reason for a young person's placement is to support their emotional 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**.

This is an outstanding service in which young people benefit from the extremely nurturing and supportive environment. Well-trained, experienced and skilled staff ensure young people are safe, feel safe and make exceptional progress in key areas of their lives, notably their education, social skills and developing their confidence. The longer young people live at the home, the more they overcome past difficulties in their lives and develop into independent, responsible individuals.

Staff work hard to build positive and meaningful relationships with young people, regardless of their diverse needs and challenges. The dedication and commitment from the staff team are key factors to young people participating and contributing to the progress in their lives by developing a sense of worth and positively engaging with their educational opportunities. Young people develop their knowledge and skills to live safe and healthier lifestyles.

Staff are proactive in addressing the challenges young people present, and work effectively in partnership with a wide range of agencies to protect and promote their welfare. Care planning and practice are highly personalised to carefully address the individual needs and wishes of each young person and focus on their development. The quality of day-to-day care, combined with inter-agency support, are particular strengths in supporting young people to do well.

Leadership and management are very strong, with an emphasis on providing excellent standards of care based on constant improvement and service

development. The manager makes effective use of comprehensive monitoring arrangements, including young people's feedback, to review the quality of care provided and continuously improve opportunities and outcomes.

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people make very good progress within a caring, nurturing environment. As their confidence and self-esteem improve from a greater understanding of their emotional well-being, young people achieve significant success in other areas of their lives. In particular, young people improve their behaviour and develop their social skills compared to their starting point on admission. This helps them to make new friends, and develop positive relationships with staff and other professionals who have a key role in helping them. Some incidents of risk-taking and offending behaviour do occur, which impacts on how well young people progress in all areas of their lives.

Young people's attendance at school is generally excellent and young people receive awards for their achievements, for example, 'student of the year'. Stakeholders commented, 'the best pupil we have ever had for work experience'. Young people who have had poor attendance prior to living at the home quickly return to mainstream school. Despite the support available, young people sometimes find it hard to sustain high levels of attendance which compromises their ability to achieve well.

Young people gradually develop healthier lifestyles, slowly taking more responsibility for their health and welfare. They learn how lifestyle choices can impact on their own health, for example, balanced diets, exercise, understanding sexual health, better personal hygiene and the effects of smoking. Reduction in smoking is particularly challenging, which young people find hard to incorporate into healthier lifestyles.

Young people have a significant say in their care and are confident in making their views known. They can read what is written about them and discuss a wide range of issues such as their reward schemes, finances, food, personal activities, holidays, house rules and the decoration of the home, with the staff.

Young people benefit from opportunities to take part in leisure activities such as country walks, climbing, ice skating and meals out. Young people also have the independence to socialise with their friends and pursue their own hobbies, frequenting skate parks. Young people develop their life skills to assist them towards independence. This includes travelling independently in the community, budgeting, shopping, preparing and cooking meals, maintaining good hygiene levels and keeping their environment clean and tidy. Stakeholders commented: 'Staff do all they can to help young people prepare for independent living.'

Where appropriate, young people freely make contact with family members and friends. They are helped by staff, who encourage and promote contact with their

friends and relatives so that young people can maintain and develop relationships with significant people in their lives.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from outstanding, supportive relationships with staff, who have a high degree of understanding of their individual needs. Sensitive care practice is used extremely well to build positive relationships and develop trust. This is key to the exceptional individual support, guidance and reassurance young people receive through their everyday care and focused discussions with staff. Compared to the past turmoil and crisis in young people's lives prior to placement, this high quality of care helps them aspire to do well and make significant progress during the time they live at the home.

The fruitful, nurturing relationships with staff, and open and honest discussions about young people's behaviour, needs and care keep young people central to what happens in the home. Diverse individual needs, in particular young people's vulnerabilities and personality traits, are identified and well understood by staff. Young people benefit greatly from a skilled staff team who care for them in line with their individual, detailed and comprehensive care plans.

There is a strong emphasis within the home on promoting young people's physical and emotional well-being, health, welfare and education. Young people are encouraged to routinely attend health appointments and go to school every day. Staff ensure young people access specialist agencies such as counselling and youth offending that provide extra support. In addition, staff work effectively with schools, placing authorities and the police to ensure young people's needs are met.

Staff are confident and resourceful in helping young people manage their feelings and develop more socially acceptable behaviour. They use various, individual approaches to help young people recognise and accept responsibility for their actions. Frank, open discussion, restorative practice, individual incentives and effective use of external agencies are all used to encourage better, sustainable behaviour, improving young people's quality of life and progress towards independence. Stakeholders commented: 'Staff do a very good job at keeping young people out of trouble with the police.'

Young people's views significantly impact upon decisions made about their individual care and the day-to-day running of the home. Regular residents' meetings, key-working sessions, daily interaction and care reviews allow young people to express their views and effect changes on matters that are important to them. Staff sensitively respect young people's views, opinions and their rights. The quality of staff support ensures young people are able to reflect on their behaviour, attitude and personal views. Staff are adept at helping young people express themselves and develop their negotiating skills to arrive at understandable, acceptable decisions.

Young people know how to complain and their concerns are taken seriously. The one complaint since the last inspection has been dealt with imaginatively. This has helped young people consider the impact their behaviour has on each other and learn how to live together.

The home provides a safe, pleasant environment, which is decorated and furnished to a high standard. Its location provides young people with easy access to community services and public transport.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Staff are dedicated to ensuring that the young people live in a safe, secure and caring environment. Young people are safe, feel safe in the home and commented, 'there is always someone to talk to'. Staff understand and implement strategies to support young people with their anxiety and behaviour on an individual basis. This has led to a significant reduction with regards to self-harming behaviour and aggression as young people develop a strong sense of their own safety and well-being. Young people confirm that they feel safe and raise no concerns about their care and treatment.

Staff are trained in a range of safeguarding issues. They have an excellent understanding of the agreed local authority and police protocols should they have any concerns about a young person's safety or well-being. Dynamic partnership working with external agencies contributes to young people's safety and adds to staff's knowledge of child protection issues in the local and wider community. For a large majority of the time young people do not go missing from the home. Staff are very aware of young people's vulnerabilities, and their practice is resourceful in minimising the frequency young people are missing. Young people benefit from the positive relationships and effective strategies agreed with other key agencies. Stakeholders commented, 'excellent at keeping young people safe, very committed'.

Likewise, incidents of bullying are very rare, again due to the quality of care, close supervision by staff, excellent placement planning and thorough knowledge of young people's needs and behaviours. The highly effective approach in promoting positive behaviour, enhanced by firm, fair and consistent boundaries, means that staff rarely use physical intervention as a means to keep young people safe. Staff use any incidents to develop their understanding of young people's needs and triggers, and constantly review and update strategies to reduce any risk-taking and damaging behaviour.

There are robust recruitment procedures in place which ensure that staff working with young people in the home are carefully selected and vetted. The physical environment is safe and well maintained, with regular checks on gas, electrical, and fire safety systems.

Leadership and management

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

Young people live in an exceptionally well-managed home. Leadership and management of the home are highly effective, efficient and extensively conducted in the best interests of young people. Management practice thoroughly demonstrates a capacity for continuous improvement, supporting young people to progress in their lives. The manager and staff are fully committed and driven to provide young people with optimum levels of support to achieve well in their lives. The one recommendation about new carpeting from the last inspection has been met and there are other extensive improvements to the décor.

Regular comprehensive monitoring promotes the high quality of care. Recent changes in monitoring focus more clearly on the progress young people make as a result of their care. This ensures young people make strides in their development as staff resourcefully adapt their support to meet their changing needs. Staff are very enthusiastic about their work and have high expectations of themselves and the support they provide to young people.

Young people benefit from a competent, qualified and experienced staff team. Staff are well trained, and effectively supervised and supported, ensuring young people receive stable, consistent, person-centred care. Training and support ensure staff recognise the diverse and complex needs of young people. Care practice reflects staff's wealth of knowledge about individual young people and their ability to cope with some challenging and complex situations. This is an accomplished contribution to working with young people who are vulnerable from past life experiences and therefore at times require intense levels of support.

The staff team is extremely supportive of each other and staff communicate well to ensure they are up to date with events in young people's lives. Daily handovers, regular team meetings, good record keeping and an open-door management style are utilised well, to provide a transparent working environment and promote young people's safety and welfare.

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.