

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Bill Drumm
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home accommodates up to three young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. It is provided by a private organisation.

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**.

The majority of young people who live at this home have done so for quite some time. They enjoy living in a warm, caring environment where clear and consistent boundaries are maintained by a well-established and experienced staff team. This helps young people who have complex needs to feel safe, secure and cared for. All young people have made excellent progress since their admission. The home and the organisation itself have high aspirations for the young people in their care.

Young people attend school every day and enjoy a wide range of leisure pursuits. All achievements, no matter how small are celebrated. This helps young people to continue to develop socially acceptable behaviour which in turn helps to improve their confidence and self-esteem.

Overall this is a good home which achieves outstanding outcomes for young people.

Areas identified for improvement relate to: the individual placement plans for young people; missing from home records; key worker meetings; restraint records and the home's development plan. These have not impacted on the safety and welfare of young people.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure that all children understand, within their level of understanding, the purpose and content of their plan and the reasoning behind any decisions about their care (NMS 25.1)
- ensure that each child's placement plan is monitored by a key worker within the home who ensures that the requirements of the plan are implemented in the day-to-day care of that child (NMS 25.2)
- ensure that where there has been a physical restraint, children are always given the opportunity to be examined by a registered nurse or medical practitioner (NMS 3.16)
- ensure that staff working within the home know and implement the local authority and home's policy in relation to children going missing and their role in implementing that policy (NMS 5.2)
- ensure that the home has a written development plan, which is reviewed annually. (NMS 15.2) 2

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Young people benefit significantly from the discussions and stimulating activities that staff use to help build relationships with them. As a result, young people gain a thorough knowledge and understanding of their own backgrounds and future plans.

Young people enjoy excellent health. Their health needs are clearly identified and services are provided in a timely manner to meet those needs. Young people have a very good understanding of key health risks such as smoking and drug/alcohol use. As a consequence of this no young people at the home smoke or use drugs or alcohol.

Young people attend school on a full-time basis and their attendance is excellent. For some, this is a major improvement from their starting points and they are making very good progress towards their desired educational targets. All achievements, no matter how small are celebrated. This helps to improve their self-confidence and self-esteem. Young people spoken to said they generally enjoyed school. One young person was particularly proud of a game they had made in woodwork and was keen to show how it worked. Another young person has recently written a song about their life experiences. Staff commented that it was good that they now felt comfortable, confident and secure enough to do this.

Where appropriate young people benefit from clear contact arrangements with significant people in their lives. This helps them to settle into the routine of the home quickly and to enjoy seeing their families. The facilitating of contact is done very well. Staff work very hard and proactively with parents, family members and placing social workers to promote positive outcomes. One young person's social worker said, 'staff here are, very good. Sometimes my young person is a little upset following

contact visits but staff just, work through it. You can tell they really care'. Maintaining contact with family and friends helps young people to develop their sense of identity.

Young people are able to pursue a diverse range of activities, hobbies and interests. For example, girl guides life-saving classes at the local swimming baths, horse riding, cycling, restaurant meals and walking. By supporting their individual choices young people are able to develop their social skills, build their self-esteem and self-confidence.

Young people are encouraged and supported to develop their daily living skills and to become more independent. They take part in activities according to their level of maturity and understanding. Young people learn skills through taking part in the tasks of running the home, such as cleaning and cooking whilst they are also given help and support with social skills, laundry, healthy eating, budgeting, clothing care and shopping.

Quality of care

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

Young people living in this home benefit greatly from an experienced and caring staff team. Staff are very enthusiastic and committed to addressing young people's care and safety needs. One staff member said, 'one of the best things about the home is the very good quality of relationships that we build with the young people.' Young people enjoy warm relationships with staff in the home and there is an excellent rapport between them based on mutual respect. Young people confirm this saying, 'I get on well with all the staff' and 'there is always someone to talk to if you want.'

The home has some good systems for seeking the views of young people about the way the home is run. Staff provide opportunities for daily group discussions, particularly at mealtimes and young people have access to independent visitors. Each young person also has one-to-one key worker sessions. Notes of these sessions are retained and demonstrate clearly that new targets and goals for the young people to achieve are discussed. However, the notes of these meetings do not record the progress made toward achieving the revised target or goal. Young people may not therefore fully appreciate when they have achieved their target and celebrate that success.

Young people are confident and relaxed around staff. They said they are confident to complain if they need to and understand how to do so. There have been no complaints at the home since the last inspection.

Admissions to the home are very carefully planned. No emergency admissions take place and the welfare of existing residents is fully considered before new young people are introduced into the home. The home's manager and staff find out about young people's differences, routines, likes and dislikes, strengths and needs prior to admission. This helps to ensure that a placement at the home has the greatest

chance of success. However, there are some shortfalls in the quality of written care plans. Care plans do not take into account the different academic abilities of the young people and are not written in plain English. This impacts upon the ability of young people to fully understand what their placement at the home is meant to achieve and how their needs will be fully met.

Organised activities, such as girl guides, swimming, walking, camping trips and helping on a local farm help to keep young people fit and healthy. Young people are encouraged to eat healthy foods and snacks and they are involved in planning, shopping for and cooking meals. Staff support and encourage young people to attend all routine appointments with dentists, doctors and opticians. In addition, the looked after nurse for children also visits the home and offers advice and support to staff and young people about health issues. Young people who need it also have access to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), which promotes their emotional well-being. Arrangements for dealing with day-to-day prescribed medication are safe and all staff have received up-to-date first aid training to help ensure that young people can receive emergency treatment.

The staff work, in a clear, organised and determined manner to fully support young people's education. They work in partnership with teaching staff to ensure each young person maintains their attendance and that all school work is completed in a timely fashion. Staff have high aspirations for the young people they care for and want them to achieve their maximum potential. Close communication with professionals working in education ensures young people attend school on a full-time basis. As a result, young people are making good progress towards their desired achievement targets.

The young people live in a home that is very well located near to shops, leisure, education and employment opportunities. The interior and exterior of the home are in a very good state of structural and decorative repair. There are several spacious and well-furnished communal areas where young people can relax and enjoy watching television, use the computer, play electronic games or play board games. The home also has a dining area where members of staff and young people enjoy a meal together. Young people are encouraged to take a pride in the quality of their living accommodation by helping to keep the home clean and tidy and by personalising their own rooms. There are numerous photographs on the walls that reflect the events and activities that young people have enjoyed with staff; for example, trips to the coast and theme parks. There is an excellent maintenance and repair programme for the building. Furniture and equipment that becomes damaged or broken is repaired or replaced quickly. The garden is well maintained and safe. The home is very clean and there are homely touches throughout.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say that they are safe and feel safe, confirming that they are supported to learn how to keep themselves safe and learn about risks. One young

person's social worker said, 'I know they're very safe there, the staff talk to me regularly and I'm confident they know what they're doing'. Where particular risks are identified, well-written risk assessments are recorded to help the staff understand what action to take to minimise the identified risks. This in turn helps to develop young people's understanding and the reasons adults are concerned about them. As a result, young people say that they feel cared for and protected. Young people are not at risk of harm and do not engage in damaging, risk-taking behaviours.

The home has very good safeguarding systems and procedures for staff to follow in the event of any allegation or suspicion of abuse. The manager and staff have received child protection training. Staff are able to demonstrate a very good knowledge and understanding of the safeguarding procedures to promote and protect young people's safety. As a result, young people are kept safe from potential abuse or exploitation.

There is good written guidance for staff to follow in the event of a young person going missing, and there is evidence that the frequency with which children and young people go missing is minimised. However, one incident where a young person did go missing whilst on a community visit was not recorded appropriately. The accurate recording of young people who do go missing is essential if risk assessments are to be maintained accurately and the occasions when a young person may go missing is minimised. This helps to safeguard the young person and maintain their welfare.

Sanctions are rarely used. When they are used they are relevant and reflect the age and understanding of the young people. Any sanctions imposed are reviewed regularly for appropriateness and effectiveness. Behaviour management plans are used which contain details for staff to follow when managing young people's behaviour. It is very rare that physical restraint is used to manage behaviour at the home. Staff are fully trained in the appropriate and safe use of restraint and de-escalation techniques. Record keeping is good and there is evidence that it is monitored well to identify patterns or trends that can be used to support young people further. However, when a restraint has been used the young person involved has not always been given the opportunity to be examined by a medical practitioner. This means that if they have suffered an injury effective treatment or attention may be delayed and their welfare not fully safeguarded.

Regular fire safety checks, general checks and maintenance arrangements ensure the home is physically safe and is kept safe. All staff have received up-to-date fire safety training to enable them to minimise the risks to young people in the event of a fire at the home.

All staff are appropriately recruited and undergo suitable Criminal Records Bureau checks to ensure that they are suitable to work with young people. This helps to protect young people from potential abuse or exploitation.

Leadership and management

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

The home has a Statement of Purpose which is made available to all relevant parties to inform them about how care is provided at the home. In addition, there is a good children's guide that is appropriate to the age and understanding of the children accommodated.

There is a very committed, dedicated and experienced staff team that is skilled and competent to meet the needs of the young people living at the home. One staff member said, 'one of the best things about the home is that we have a solid and experienced staff team which helps us to provide a consistency of care to the young people.' Management support and supervision are described as, 'really good' and, 'relevant' by staff, who clearly value the contributions of the manager and senior staff within the organisation.

The young people are receiving care from staff that are appropriately trained to meet their needs. All staff are trained in a wide variety of safety and childcare subjects. An on-going programme of regular refresher training is provided to enhance the staff team's competency and to ensure they retain the skills necessary to meet the needs of the young people.

The manager has systems to monitor practice and report and evaluate the administration systems of the home. This is supported by regular unannounced visits from the provider to help monitor and improve the quality of care at the home. Service development plans are also in place. However, the home's development plan is not fully understood by all staff and is not reviewed at regular intervals. This means that staff and young people do not know what the strengths and weaknesses of the home are and how the care provided, or the running of the home can be improved.

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.