

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Rachel Ruth Britten
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home provides care for up to two young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. A private company owns and operates the setting.

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**.

Children and young people make very good progress across all aspects of their welfare and development. They develop extremely positive relationships with staff and are integrated very well in the local community. They enjoy increasing amounts of contact with family and friends who are important to them and are in healthy daily routines. Children and young people's good progress is underpinned by outstanding care. The staff and manager place the needs and views of children and young people at the centre of all their practice. They demonstrate exemplary empathy, warmth, nurture and commitment to each child and young person. This is known by children and young people, parents and professionals alike: they all provide consistently positive feedback about the quality of care provided.

Staff and the manager all demonstrate consistently safe working practice. They minimise risks to children and young people in a proportionate and effective way. Children and young people confirm that unsafe situations and behaviour are well managed by staff. This is because they set realistic, effective boundaries and expectations within an extremely personalised, warm and caring approach. Leadership and management arrangements remain strong, despite the recent appointment of a new manager. The new manager has worked in the home prior to managing it and is well supported by the organisation. The manager demonstrates good capacity to rectify two minor shortfalls in recording. Neither of the shortfalls significantly hold back the high quality, safe care which has consistently been provided by the home since the last inspection.

Areas for improvement

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
29 (2001)	ensure that records show the names of all visitors to the home and the reasons for their visit. This applies particularly to visiting staff within the organisation. (Regulation 29(1) schedule 4.13)	05/12/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure that there is effective, accurate monitoring of all records kept by the home to ensure compliance with the home's policies and to identify patterns and trends. This relates particularly to improving the monitoring of risk assessments, placement tracker records and missing without authority records. (NMS 21.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Children and young people make good progress and are able to make and sustain attachments. For example, a young person was able to successfully return home in the summer of 2013. She made sustained and improved relationships with adults, siblings and peers during her placement and wrote: 'I have enjoyed my time here, I thank them all for helping me to go home - I'll miss you all and I love you all xxxx.' Her social worker commented during the placement that 'good relationships with staff enable her to talk about her feelings.' Similarly, children newer in placement have developed positive relationships with the staff and also peers in the neighbourhood with whom they play after school. One child recently commented about the manager: 'she made me feel happy and comfortable living at (this home), thank you.'

Children and young people understand the importance of healthy lifestyles. They are taking regular exercise and are in good eating and sleeping routines. Children benefit from staff's sensitive and proactive approach to help them with potential health difficulties, such as eating too many sweets, being unable to concentrate for long, and the onset of puberty. Children and young people enjoy good opportunities to read age-appropriate literature about health and discuss their physical and emotional development with staff. This is because staff are very sensitive and available to them, finding ways to tactfully help and advise them. Children and young people also

attend venues appropriate to their age for counselling and peer support with health and behavioural issues, including loss and anger management. Young people now understand their key health risks and no longer behave in ways which threaten their physical and/or sexual health. As a result, they have been able to return home to their family as was their wish.

Children and young people are developing a positive gender and style identity and are involved in many activities in the community. This is because staff give good encouragement and opportunities for children and young people to make suitable choices for their clothes, rooms, music and make-up. Children's emerging identities are balanced with appropriate play and entertainment, so that children develop in an age-appropriate, healthy way. For example, they play on bikes and scooters and walk the dogs with local friends and neighbours. Their friends are welcomed into the home for a Halloween party or to help with the guinea pigs and staff take children's friends to an organised bonfire party. As a result, children and young people are becoming age-appropriate, confident individuals.

The educational achievement of children and young people is good, taking into account their disrupted attendance patterns prior to placement. For example, some young people are attending mainstream school and make good progress, choosing their options for GCSE before leaving the home to return to their family. One school link professional said a young person's 'academic levels are improving massively - her tutor is very pleased with her academic progress and positive attitude to learning.' Other young people are attending an educational course with a view to starting a new mainstream high school placement once this is negotiated.

Quality of care

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

Staff have consistently high aspirations for all the children and young people in the home. They work tirelessly and successfully to challenge barriers to children's full participation in school and in the community. For example, their close working relationships with safeguarding professionals in school have ensured that children and young people have been able to make positive relationships, behave safely and progress, including educationally. The link professional at a local high school said, 'there is an excellent service from all staff at all times - communication is excellent and they are supportive to the school and the young person, any concerns are dealt with swiftly and with extreme professionalism; it is obvious that staff care passionately about them.'

Staff build exceptionally effective partnerships with social work services and families. A social worker said, 'I have been really pleased with how my young person has been looked after and all the staff have been really supportive with me and helped her in all ways. The quality of after care and follow-on support has been fantastic - they visited on a weekly basis at first and offered phone support, and attended the review at the beginning of October even though this was not required.' Equally, parents said, 'the care of all the staff has been amazing - I could always talk to staff,

the support is brilliant, my child also speaks highly of the staff.'

Staff ensure that children and young people's wishes and feelings are heard. For example, they requested that an advocate was enlisted on behalf of a child whose care plan stated they would move on very shortly to another foster family. The advocate said, 'the home could not have been more supportive of enabling the child's voice to be heard. They had an open way of working and were clearly passionate about young people having a voice.' As a result, the social worker wrote to senior managers about the child's wish to stay at the home and noted that the child 'appears so happy and contented and full of confidence around staff - well done - keep up the fantastic work.'

Similarly, staff ensure that children's views significantly influence the running of the home. They have very regular house meetings when menus and activities are planned and all targets are agreed. Children and young people talk with staff throughout the day because staff are so approachable, interested and nurturing towards them. Meal and bedtime routines are particularly well used by staff to nurture children and confirm caring relationships. As a result, children and young people are settled in their placements, are fully engaged in their care plans and are achieving positive outcomes.

Staff are proactive and imaginative in finding ways to support children in making progress in every aspect of their lives. For example, they welcome children's local friends to the home and take them on activities and trips if the child or young person wants this. They encourage interaction with local families and neighbours. For example, they exchange help with fixing a bicycle for walking the dog, a meal invitation or a home baked cake, fully involving the child at the centre of every activity. Staff seek out information and tickets for local entertainment events and enthuse with children and young people about what community life has to offer. As a result, children and young people feel a sense of belonging in the community and are learning about appropriate friendships, social diversity and good social conduct.

Staff demonstrate excellent skills and abilities to effectively communicate with children and young people. This is because their underpinning knowledge and training gives them a deep appreciation of the difficulties children and young people face, including poor attachments, loss, bereavement and lack of self-worth. As a result, children can express confidence in staff and the manager. For example, one child recently said about a member of staff, 'she has helped me and she is the best'. Equally, staff are competent and effective report writers and contributors to professionals' meetings, often helping children and young people to participate and say or write their views. An independent reviewing officer commented, 'there is consistent support from staff, empowering X to develop her self-care skills and improve her self-esteem; detailed reports about her progress and achievements across the five outcomes are provided - they promote a family home environment and work in partnership with parents and professionals - I have no hesitation in saying this has been a very positive placement which has worked for X and the family - many thanks.'

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children and young people are safe and feel safe within the home and the surrounding community. This is because staff work in an age-appropriate, proportionate way with them and are alert to their specific individual risks. For example, when children are at known, significant risk of going missing while on contact visits to siblings, staff arrange suitable supervised activities of children's choice, but at locations with which they are not familiar. This has successfully prevented children going missing while assuring an enjoyable contact time for siblings.

Similarly, staff negotiate fair amounts of free time for children with the proviso of knowing where children are and who they are with. Children are encouraged to bring friends and peers to the home and staff make links with their parents to ensure that friends are known and consistent messages are communicated to them all about the expectations for good behaviour and coming in at agreed times. Children and young people are known by the local community police, who are regular visitors to the home in a preventive capacity. Police positively support the staff, endorsing messages about staying safe in the community and the importance of keeping in touch with staff. Children are also well known to neighbours and shop owners who keep a watchful eye. As a result, children mostly adhere well to behaviour boundaries about coming in on time and they behave well when out in the community. If children and young people fail to return, staff immediately look for them and liaise with relevant parents, neighbours and police to ensure that children are quickly found and are safe. Incidents of unauthorised absence through coming in late are very seldom now, despite times being brought forward with the dark nights, and there are no incidents of going missing from the home.

Children and young people feel well protected by staff and are safe from abuse, exploitation and bullying. This is because staff are experienced, trained, alert and active in their work with children and young people. Staff provide excellent role models and promote positive behaviour through all their interactions with young people. They provide praise for every improvement and success that children and young people achieve and make being with staff in the home or out on activities an enjoyable place to be. For example, one child wrote after an instance of being late in, 'I will come in on time and am looking forward to my holiday.' Overall, children and young people do not take risks or lose control of their emotions and there is no restraint used in the home.

The home environment is physically safe and appropriately secure and is maintained to a very good standard. Visitors are signed in and informed of fire procedures. However, the organisation has another home very close by and staff from that home and additional support and managerial staff are also very regular visitors to the home. These persons are all suitably vetted and are known to the children and young people, but their short visits are rarely put into the visitor record. The reasons for their visits and their time of departure are rarely noted in the daily log either. This

means that the records of who was present in the home at any one time are not always complete. There has not been any adverse impact on a child or young person, but there is a greater potential for an allegation to be made if records do not show accurately who is present.

Leadership and management

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

A suitable new Registered Manager has come into post via internal promotion during summer 2013. She possesses the necessary skills and has good experience of working in the home and with the area manager, (who was previously the Registered Manager of the home). As a result, children and young people have benefited from a seamless transition and staff continue to be well supported in providing an outstanding level of care. A social worker commented: 'A big thank you to the manager for professional input at the looked after children review - she demonstrated a lot of knowledge about the child, with her feelings at heart - clearly child-centred like all the staff at the home.'

Recommendations from the last inspection have been addressed and the new manager is developing her skills at monitoring the home. She works with the home's monthly visitor and the area manager to scrutinise the home's work each month. She knows that the home runs well because of the skill and effectiveness of staff. She is aware of the need to maintain good support and training for staff and to keep all risk assessments, care plans, and incident records up to date. This enables consistency of care to be maintained in the event of cover staff being required. However, working as part of the shift rota because there is only one child in placement at present, limits her time for management duties. She is aware that there are a few inaccuracies in records and some room for improvement and streamlining in her analysis of the records. At present, consultation and records are not used in a coordinated way to identify trends and new solutions for developing the home and maximising children and young people's progress month on month.

The provider meets the aims and objectives in the Statement of Purpose well and receives extremely positive feedback from professionals and parents about the quality of care in the home. The home is well resourced to ensure that the quality of the home environment is very well maintained and developed to reflect children and young people's own preferences. Likewise, the quality and suitability of activities, including holidays, and the priority given to helping children save and budget, ensures that they receive the best care and support to prepare them for making a positive contribution in adult life.

Staff are experienced and skilled. They receive regular supervision which is of good quality, including keeping up to date with new legislation and practice developments. Their individual training needs are identified and met, including recent relevant training on child sexual exploitation and attachment disorder and loss. They work extremely well as a team, conducting good quality handovers and making accurate records to ensure excellent continuity during periods of lone working. Children and

young people's views are obtained for staff appraisals and as part of monthly monitoring. Their comments are also noted on most of the records about them. As a result, all staff, as well as the manager, can confidently demonstrate the difference the home has made to children and young people who have lived here since the last inspection.

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.