

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Valerie Shephard
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This is a private children's home that is part of a large national organisation. It provides care and accommodation for up to four young people with emotional and/or behaviour 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 excellent home which provides extremely good care to young people. The environment is safe and highly nurturing enhanced by the therapeutic input. Young people say they believe staff care about them and parents are very positive about the quality of care provided. One parent said, 'I am very happy with the home and the care that staff provide for my child.'

Care planning is personalised and tailor made to suit each individual young person. Sustained and regular consultation with young people ensures that care planning takes their views into account. Young people continue to make impressive progress in relation to their educational, behavioural, social and emotional development.

Relationships between staff and young people are extremely good and young people respond exceedingly well to positive behaviour management strategies. Young people say they feel safe and protected from harm. Comments from young people include, 'staff like me, they are caring, they are fun and they make me feel safe.' A social worker said 'this is one of the nicest residential homes I have visited, I feel welcome, there is a relaxed atmosphere and the young people are comfortable with staff.'

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Outcomes for young people are excellent. Young people make exceptional progress

in all areas of their development and are preparing to move to family placement or toward independence.

The home provides a therapeutic environment which focuses on the development of positive and nurturing relationships between young people and staff. Young people learn to trust key members of staff, which assists with the development of healthy attachments and feelings of self-worth. Staff comment that young people are happier and more confident.

Young people enjoy school, have excellent attendance and make good progress in their education. Some young people have made immense progress in school narrowing the gap between their achievements and those of their peers. Young people have aspirations for their future and support is in place for them to achieve their goals. For example, where young people have identified a choice of career and staff help them to explore how they can achieve this. This means that young people are assisted to get the best out of their education and be aspirational about their future.

Young people benefit from a healthy environment and their health needs are exceptional well managed. They understand the dangers of smoking, and using drugs and alcohol and do not engage in these activities. Support from the looked after children's nurse ensures that young people's sexual health needs are met where appropriate.

Young people positively engage in a variety of activities in the community. There is full participation in physical pursuits such as running, swimming, football, karate and horse riding which support good physical health. Young people are developing friendships, in some cases for the first time. Arrangements for young people's friends to visit the home and stay for tea help to raise their confidence and self-esteem. Involvement in other interests such as voluntary work further creates opportunities for socialisation and acquisition of new skills.

Young people enjoy contact with their families and others of significance to them. They benefit from well organised and safe arrangements which ensure that their contact is positive and fruitful. Parents said that staff do their utmost to make sure the contact is positive for all involved. The home is instrumental in highlighting when contact plans are in need of review. The provision of contact supports young people's identity and helps them to maintain established attachments with significant people from their past.

Young people learn independence skills appropriate to their age and stage of development. All develop basic skills in relation to personal hygiene, keeping bedrooms tidy, cooking simple meals and helping around the home. Older residents work through the organisation's own independence programme which clearly demonstrates the progress made. These measures equip young people with the skills necessary for an independent future.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from exceptionally high quality care where individual and diverse needs are central to the running of the home. The staff team work seamlessly to provide a structured environment with clear boundaries and routines. Regular consultation with the therapeutic team ensures that the most effective management strategies are used for the benefit of young people.

Staff strive to promote positive relationships with the young people which assists with the development of trust and positive attachments. Young people readily seek affection and staff reciprocate in a warm and effective manner.

Staff are highly supportive of children's engagement in education and ensure that routines enable them to participate fully in their learning. A daily handover system between home and school promotes positive relationships and provides opportunities for sharing information and addressing potential difficulties. Homework is high priority and staff fully support young people to complete set work. The home has a 'wall of achievement' displaying evidence of children's successes in education and leisure. This provides young people with a daily reminder of their progress and accomplishments, which assists with the development of their self-esteem. Young people are clearly proud of the display and enjoy showing it to visitors.

Young people enjoy a healthy environment which promotes their physical and emotional well-being. They have access to primary care services and benefit from excellent relationships with the looked after children's nurse. This has enabled young people to seek specific advice in relation to matters such as sexual health.

Staff promote participation in community activities and young people speak positively about their sporting achievements such as running, football and karate. Staff use their positive relationships with young people to encourage them to persist in their activities and work toward goals. This support enables young people to persevere with their chosen activity and gain confidence from their achievements.

Comprehensive care plans are in place and are subject to regular review and update. Discussions with young people occur on a regular basis through individual sessions and young people's meetings. Young people confirm that staff listen to their views and act upon them. For example, young people said that staff ask them how they should manage them when they are struggling to behave well. One young person said, 'they know to leave me to calm down rather than keep talking to me.'

The home environment fully meets the needs of young people. A programme of re-decoration and refurbishment ensures the home remains a comfortable and pleasant place for young people to live in. Bedrooms are personalised to suit individual tastes and young people are proud of their own private space. The outside resource room is now usable and provides an additional resource for young people.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The home provides an extremely safe environment for young people. Young people say they feel safe, and believe staff keep them safe. Staff are observant to any signs of bullying and ensure this issue is regularly discussed in young people's meetings and individual sessions. Young people said there is no bullying, however if they were bullied they know who they would talk to about it. They are confident that staff will deal with issues of bullying if they arise. There are no concerns that any young person is at risk of child sexual exploitation.

Staff are trained in safeguarding and fully understand the protocols to follow in the event of any child protection concerns. They are vigilant to any signs which could suggest a young person is at risk of harm. A range of comprehensive risk assessments support staff to manage young people safely in accordance with their known vulnerabilities. The management and investigations of allegations against staff are thorough and effective and follow appropriate discussions with safeguarding professionals. These measures help to ensure that young people are safe from adults who could cause them harm.

Behaviour management within the home focuses on positive rather than negative behaviour wherever possible. Staff use imaginative and creative ways to focus on positive aspects of behaviour and aim to 'catch' young people behaving well. Where sanctions are used, these closely match the behaviour to assist young people to connect their actions with the sanction. Staff say that often a suggestion about improving behaviour or a reminder of incentives is enough to prevent an escalation of difficulties. Staff use individually designed incentives to encourage and reinforce desired behaviour and work co-operatively with young people to set achievable targets. Examples include, attending school every day, completing homework or tidying their bedroom. In addition, young people tell staff how best to manage their behaviour when they are struggling. For instance, one young person chooses to withdraw to his bedroom until ready to come out and apologise. Physical restraint is infrequent in the home because staff are generally effective in their use of calming and de-escalation techniques.

The home has rigorous procedures in place for when young people go missing from home. During the last few months there has been an immense reduction in these incidents and currently this is not a problem. Staff know the young people well and are watchful for factors which may increase the risk of them going missing. There are very strong links with the police who often visit the home to talk about the risks of going missing. The missing from home co-ordinator said, 'we have always discussed any issues concerning the young people and any reports of missing from home directly with the Registered Manager. She has always been very much on board and willing to share information and keen to reduce any unnecessary demand on the police while ensuring that safeguarding is a priority. It is fair to say that in the

past, throughout lengthy missing from home episodes, the Registered Manager maintained a close working relationship with the police and social services and ultimately the matter was addressed with success. I would consider that the unit is very professionally managed.'

The home follows effective procedures for the recruitment and selection of staff. There is comprehensive exploration of any gaps in employment history and references routinely verified. These practices help to protect young people from adults who could present a risk to their well-being. The home provides a physically safe environment for young people to live in. A comprehensive range of health and safety checks ensure there are no hazards which could create a risk to young people. The home undertakes regular fire drills which assist young people to know what to do in the event of a fire. Electronic alarms are fitted to bedroom doors, however these are limited to night use only. Consequently they do not restrict young people's freedom of movement in the home. These measures help to ensure that the living environment for young people is safe without creating an institutional feel.

Leadership and management

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

The Registered Manager is suitably experienced and qualified, and manages the home effectively and with unquestionable enthusiasm. She is committed to a programme of continual improvement in the operation of the home for the benefit of young people. Excellent leadership inspires the dedicated staff team to provide the best possible care they can to young people. Strong and positive links with the police, placing authorities and health services ensures young people's needs are met.

The Statement of Purpose is comprehensive and subject to regular review and update. Consequently this provides thorough information about the home for parents and placing authorities who wish to learn about its aims and objectives. The home's development plan highlights the strengths of the home and areas for improvement. Recent innovations include the 'wall of achievement' and the new 'mentor checklist', which supports staff learning about core tasks in the home.

The staff team are highly valued and exceedingly well supported. Members of staff said 'the manager is excellent, approachable, fully involved and has high aspirations for young people and staff.' There are sufficient members of staff, suitably experienced and qualified to care effectively for young people. Most of the staff team hold a recognised child care qualification and new staff follow a thorough induction programme which ensures they have the necessary skills to fulfil their caring role. There is a strong focus in the home on staff training and skill acquisition. Staff complete mandatory training in core areas such as safeguarding, use of physical restraint and behaviour management. New staff rapidly become familiar with the organisation's therapeutic model which is central to the care of young people. Consequently young people experience care from staff who have the necessary knowledge and skills to fulfil this role effectively.

Staff benefit from high quality supervision which takes place regularly in accordance with the Statement of Purpose. Supervision records are thorough, dated, signed and set out actions arising from the meeting. Frequent consultation with the therapeutic team assists staff to sustain an emotionally nurturing environment for young people. This helps them with the development of their emotional resilience and feelings of well-being.

The Registered Manager makes good use of rigorous monitoring systems to oversee the quality of care in the home. For example, she promptly addresses any actions raised as a result of reports of visits conducted under regulation 33. There is consistent evaluation of the effectiveness of the use of physical restraint and sanctions. These measures ensure that young people's physical and emotional well-being remains at the forefront of care delivery. There is effective consultation with young people achieved through individual sessions, use of questionnaires and young people's meetings. Consequently young people have a voice and their views and opinions clearly influence the running of the home.

The home provides a highly safe and comfortable environment for young people with a focus on constant improvement to maintain standards. The home's development plan includes a range of objectives to sustain improvements in young people's lives.

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.