

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Mandy Williams
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is owned and operated by a private organisation. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four children and young people. The children and young people may have emotional and behavioural difficulties, including attachment problems.

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**.

This is a good home that makes a positive difference to the lives of children and young people. It provides them with opportunities to achieve positive outcomes. Children and young people say that they enjoy living at the home and that they feel safe here. The staff group is largely stable and they provide consistent and nurturing care. As a result young people report that they have positive relationships with staff. This consistency of care and predictability of response has also enabled young people to develop their emotional resilience. Social workers involved with the home are very complimentary about the care that young people receive.

Young people's views are central to the decision making in the home. Staff successfully motivate children and young people and engage them in a variety of activities. Young people have gained in confidence and self-esteem as a result. Young people are also involved in the organisation's children's forum where they contribute to the improvement agenda.

The home is well managed and young people's progress is clearly monitored. The Registered Manager, who has worked in the home for a number of years, is well respected by staff and young people. Quality assurance processes are good, with the Registered Manager keen to secure further improvements.

Children and young people's needs are well met through personalised care planning. They make good progress across all aspects of their welfare and development. Young people's attendance at school is excellent. Placement plans are thorough and

subject to regular review to ensure that they are meeting the changing needs of young people. However, all parties involved with the young person have not always signed off their placement plans following a review. A requirement is made regarding this, although this has not impacted negatively on the high quality care afforded to young people in the home.

As a result of this inspection, three recommendations are made. These relate to: the annual appraisal for the Registered Manager; scheduled handover times between staff shifts; and specific training for staff on the supervision of young people's contact.

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
12A (2001)	ensure that there is co-operation with the child's placing authority in agreeing and signing the plan for the child's placement. Specifically, that any reviews of the placement plan are signed by the placing authority and those with parental responsibility. (Regulation 12A (1))	24/05/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure that staff have appropriate training, supervision and support if they are required to supervise and facilitate contact (NMS 9.2)
- ensure that staff rotas have time scheduled to ensure handovers are held (NMS 17.6)
- ensure that all staff have their performance individually and formally appraised at least annually; this is with particular reference to the appraisal of the Registered Manager. (NMS 19.6)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Children and young people living in the home make good progress in all areas of

their lives. Prior to moving to the home, some young people have experienced many changes of placement in their short lives. This has resulted in a lack of trust of adults, poor self-esteem and attachment difficulties. However, they have made considerable progress since admission to the home. Social workers comment upon the 'excellent progress' that young people have made since admission. Children and young people are developing in confidence, learning to trust adults and beginning to believe in themselves.

Children and young people benefit from a strong and consistent staff group. Young people feel safe and secure in their care. Staff have earned the trust and respect of those they care for. Good staffing levels enable staff to promote the individuality of each child and young person. They express confidence in staff being available for them.

Children and young people enjoy healthy lifestyles. They are physically active and take part in a range of outdoor activities, such as swimming and roller skating, that support them to keep fit. As young people have gained in confidence and ability, this has resulted in improvements in their self-esteem. Young people also enjoy a healthy and varied diet and have an understanding of nutrition. They are able to contribute to the menu planning in the home.

All young people attend school regularly and are making good progress. Some young people attend mainstream schools, while others attend schools within the organisation. There is regular communication between the home and schools. Education plans are routinely reviewed and the possibility of a move to mainstream school is always given consideration. This ensures that young people's educational progress is monitored and they are assisted to fulfil their potential.

Children and young people have access to the organisation's therapeutic team to address their emotional health needs. Individual therapy may be undertaken with young people. However, staff are also able to access advice and guidance on how best to respond to the presenting behaviours of children and young people. Consequently, they are able to provide a consistent approach that is flexible to the changing needs of the young person.

Children and young people are effectively prepared for independent living, in line with their age and stage of development. They are initially encouraged to be involved in small tasks around the home, such as helping to make tea or keeping their bedroom tidy. Staff engage the older young people in the home in a more formal programme of independence as they approach their transition to independent living. This ensures that young people are equipped with the skills that they will require in adulthood.

Children and young people benefit from regular and appropriate contact with those important to them. Staff are flexible with contact arrangements and are committed to facilitating contact for young people. Social workers are appreciative of this saying, 'Staff are always very flexible and will enable contact to take place at short notice, if at all possible.'

Quality of care

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

The staff team work cohesively and provide consistent messages to children and young people. Young people receive highly individualised care, with staff being sensitive to their varying needs. One young person said, 'Staff are great and I like living here.' Staff demonstrate a real commitment to improving the life chances of the young people in their care and ensuring that the home is a fun place to live. The staff team is largely stable and some staff have worked in the home for many years. This enables young people to develop long-term relationships with them. Young people benefit from established key worker relationships and enjoy their key worker time. One young person said, 'I have got the bestest key worker ever.'

Staff are particularly good at keeping all those involved with young people updated on their progress. Social workers are appreciative of the monthly report they receive clearly outlining the young person's progress over this period. Social workers also expressed confidence in the home keeping them informed about any pertinent issues as they arise. They report, 'Communication with staff in the home is really good.'

The views of the children and young people are central to the running of the home. Young people's meetings are held weekly, where consultation takes place on issues such as menu planning, activities and changes within the home. Young people are able to put forward suggestions and they receive a formal response from the Registered Manager about her ability to take their suggestions forward.

Young people in the home are also involved in the organisation's children's forum. Here they are able to contribute their views about future improvements and senior managers in the organisation can consult directly with young people. For example, the group recently discussed the attributes of a good key worker. Young people's responses included: 'They help me develop;' 'they understand me;' 'they take responsibility;' and 'they support me.' This group also produces regular newsletters so that all young people receive information about the issues discussed. These also include fun interactive games and quizzes to help engage children and young people of all ages. As a result children and young people feel valued and respected and are confident that staff will listen to their views.

Young people are aware of how to make a complaint, although none have been made since the last inspection. Complaints information is available in the children's guide to the home and a separate guide has also been produced clearly outlining the process. The home also has an arrangement with an independent agency to provide an advocacy service for the young people. The young people are familiar with this advocate and her role as she visits the home regularly. Hence, young people have access to an independent individual should they require help in addressing any issue of concern within the home or their care plan.

Children and young people benefit from placement plans that provide a

comprehensive picture of their individual needs. Plans are subject to regular review and take into account the views of young people and their changing needs. However, following review all those with parental responsibility have not always signed these plans. Young people also benefit from individualised incentive plans that are designed to target and address particular issues for each child. Young people are clear about these targets and receive a reward for successfully meeting them. Young people respond well to this motivational approach.

Children and young people have access to a range of health care practitioners and benefit from detailed health care plans. Arrangements for the administration of medication are well managed. Medication is stored in a suitable locked cabinet, safe procedures are followed and appropriate records maintained.

Children and young people live in a comfortable home that is decorated and furnished to a good standard. It is homely and welcoming and has the atmosphere of a family home. Young people are able to personalise their own bedrooms by choosing their own colour schemes or by putting posters on the walls. Young people really feel that they belong here.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children and young people live in a safe environment and express confidence in staff keeping them safe in the home. Staff complete safeguarding training during their induction to the home and regular refresher courses are completed. Consequently, staff are able to respond appropriately should any concerns arise. The organisation has a countering bullying policy and the home have produced a children's leaflet about bullying. This outlines what bullying may consist of and also explains clearly what children can do about this. The Registered Manager has recently introduced a more comprehensive recording process for any such incidents, although there have been none for some time.

Staff are trained in behaviour management, including the need to use physical restraint. This training is regularly updated so that staff remain confident in their ability to undertake these measures safely. Staff are required to use restraint on occasions, although the frequency of such incidents has reduced for young people since their admission to the home. The home maintains appropriate records of any incidents that do occur. Incidents receive good evaluation by the Registered Manager and staff are encouraged to reflect and learn from each event.

There are clear and consistent boundaries in the home. Children and young people know what is expected of them and they are generally polite and courteous to each other, staff and visitors. Staff provide young people with age appropriate explanations about why such boundaries are in place. They also help young people to reflect on their responses when they have responded negatively, so that they may learn a more acceptable response in the future.

Staff use sanctions and rewards to promote good behaviour. The general ethos of the home is to promote positive behaviour. In addition to achieving their identified targets in their incentive plans, young people receive rewards for a particular act of kindness or for being very helpful. For example, one young person handed in some money that he found on the floor when attending a medical appointment. He received a small gift for his honesty and commented, 'Thank you for my reward, I am very pleased with myself.'

The home complies with locally agreed protocols for young people who go missing from the home and they have established good communication systems with the local police. Good risk assessments are completed. However, some young people in the home have gone missing. Staff have implemented incentives for these young people and engaged in focused key worker sessions with a view to them appreciating the risks that they are taking. This has had some success and such incidents have reduced over recent months.

The home is physically safe and appropriately secure. Regular health and safety checks of the premises are undertaken and safety certifications are in place. Fire evacuation procedures are rehearsed frequently, including at night time. This ensures that staff and young people are confident about the steps to follow in the event of an emergency.

Leadership and management

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

A committed, competent and experienced manager manages the home. Staff are supportive of the Registered Manager and clearly understand their roles and responsibilities. The Registered Manager has a development plan in place that has recently been reviewed. Staff members take responsibility for following through allocated tasks. This ownership ensures that tasks are completed in a timely manner.

The Registered Manager has taken appropriate action to address the one requirement and two recommendations from the last inspection. The Statement of Purpose has now been revised appropriately and forwarded to Ofsted as required. It now clearly sets out the aims and objectives of the home. A system is now in place to ensure that impact risk assessments are undertaken when considering admitting a new young person to the home. In addition, young people living in the home now have access to the internet. Young people commented positively about this saying, 'We can now use the internet.'

The Registered Manager monitors the running of the home and identifies areas for improvement. The internal and external monitoring of the home is of good quality. Actions identified as a result of monitoring are addressed by the Registered Manager and signed off on completion in the home's records. There are appropriate systems in place to notify the relevant authorities of any significant events relating to children and young people in the home.

Young people's progress is also monitored well. Records are maintained in graph format that helpfully demonstrate trends and progress. Young people's records are well maintained and detailed records kept of work undertaken with them. These contribute to an understanding of their life and support appropriate decisions for their future.

There are clear lines of accountability in the home. Staff receive formal supervision on a monthly basis, from a consistent, named supervisor and receive annual performance appraisals. However, the Registered Manager's own performance appraisal has not been undertaken for some time. The staff team work well together and utilize each other's strengths. Staff receive regular training opportunities. The Registered Manager also provides refresher training sessions as part of the regular staff meetings. This ensures that children and young people are cared for by staff who are confident in their skills and abilities. However, staff have received no formal training in the supervision of contact, despite being required to supervise and produce reports for some young people's contact arrangements.

The home is well staffed and staffing rotas are clear. However, currently there is no scheduled handover period for staff. Handovers do take place but the Registered Manager is currently reliant on the goodwill of staff to facilitate this.

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.