

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Liz Driver
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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* (March 2011) and the evaluation schedule for children's homes.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service that exceeds minimum requirements

Satisfactory: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Service information

Brief description of the service

The home can accommodate up to seven young people aged from six to 17 years. The service aims to accommodate children who have emotional and behavioural difficulties and provides a therapeutic care approach towards meeting their needs. The home is part of an organisation which has three residential homes and a school.

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **outstanding**.

Children make excellent progress in relation to their starting points and thrive in a nurturing, supportive environment with consistent boundaries and support. The setting provides personalised, well-planned care taking into account the individual needs of each child. Practice is based in psycho-social theory and a therapeutic community approach which has resulted in excellent progress for the current young people. Young people are very well informed of the home's expectations and develop very good and respectful relationships with staff. This is a setting where young people feel safe, despite their risky behaviours.

The senior managers make excellent use of rigorous monitoring systems relating to the quality of care and service development. This results in improving outcomes for young people. This is a company that understands its strengths and weaknesses and is ambitious and energetic for continuous improvement.

Children come first and this can be seen from the director to the staff team. Children are able to form healthy attachments with staff and other professionals through individualised intensive programmes of therapeutic care. As a result children are able to address all areas of their lives within a safe environment. Children feel the quality of care they receive is very good. Staff support the wide age range of children extremely well with all children able to access age-appropriate care, leisure and lifestyles choices.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure there is a clear written record of all medicines administered and that stock control systems are applied consistently. (NMS 6)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for children and young people are **outstanding**.

Children benefit from highly individualised support which helps them to grow in confidence and address challenging behaviours. As a result they achieve excellent outcomes across a range of behaviours, taking into account their starting points. Children can focus on achieving their goals through regular informal and formal meetings with key workers. As a result children have ample opportunities to discuss their feelings. Where appropriate this is adapted for younger children ensuring they receive age-appropriate sessions.

Children make excellent use of their leisure time, enjoy holidays and participate in activities in the local community. As a result children develop social skills and benefit from new cultural experiences. Children regularly choose their activities.

Children lead healthy lives with the support of staff. For example good health arrangements ensure children can readily access local health services and specialist support as required. Children develop increasing awareness of how to live a healthy life; they eat healthily and take regular exercise. Unhealthy life choices are discouraged and individual key worker sessions support children understand the impact of making unhealthy choices. Children receive excellent therapeutic care which addresses their individual, physical, emotional and mental well-being. Staff support children to achieve excellent outcomes through individual therapeutic programmes. As a result children progress emotionally and gain confidence.

The staff team work closely with all education provisions to promote the benefits of daily education. As a result most children achieve outstanding attendance and educational achievement in relation to their individual ability and starting points. Children are encouraged and supported with homework and reading. Younger children enjoy bedtime stories which encourages their interests and imagination.

Children have a voice in the running of the home and in their futures. Children feel they are listened to and changes are made as a result. Children are supported to understand why decisions are made even if they don't agree with them. Children build excellent relationships with staff that further promotes and supports placement plan objectives.

Children benefit from structured and agreed contact arrangements with family and significant people. Contacts are extremely well supported by staff who are very well informed of both contact arrangements and restrictions. This results in children being able to build stronger relationships with their families and promotes children's sense of identity and belonging.

Children are encouraged to participate in daily group meetings to say how they are feeling and raise any concerns they may have about their day or their peers. This enables any worries they have to be addressed in an open and timely manner.

Children respond positively to these meetings as they are sensitively handled by experienced staff who use the therapeutic approach throughout. As a result children are able to confidently and openly express their views and thoughts. Some children remain within the organisation to adulthood. As a result children benefit from consistent support to develop their skills for adulthood. This prepares them well for the next stages in their lives.

Quality of care

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

Children and young people enjoy positive and healthy relationships with staff who are insightful, professional, sensitive and caring. Children state that staff are 'ok and really do care about us'. Children say they feel safe in the home. The embedded therapeutic approach ensure children's feelings, views and wishes are considered to a high standard. Children fully contribute to the running of the home with input in areas such as food and activities.

Children feel listened to; for example after incidents they can reflect on their actions and record their views. Children can voice any issues directly to children or staff in daily group meetings. Staff skilfully employ therapeutic approaches to support children address any issues in an open and honest atmosphere. Children know how to complain both formally and informally and are confident to do so.

Children are cared for by staff who are skilled at applying boundaries that they feel are fair and consistent. Children feel comfortable with staff and respond positively to staff intervention. Staff practice is exceptional in dealing with very challenging behaviours and maximising immediate protection for individual young people. Children know why they are at the setting and contribute to placement reviews with support from staff. Children are supported to access appropriate services to meet their physical, emotional and psychological health needs. Staff are highly reflective in their practice and as a result they are able change their practices to promote better outcomes for children.

Children receive exceptional support in their attendance at the most appropriate school and in encouragement to complete home work. Liaison with schools is excellent with reflective discussions daily on return from school. This enables children to discuss any areas that have caused them upset or difficulties whilst at school. To further enhance home and school relationships, staff work in school on a regular basis providing increased support to both the children and teachers.

Children are encouraged to keep fit by participating in activities both in the house, at school or in the local community. The home will arrange a personal trainer who spends time with children cycling and swimming. Holidays are very much enjoyed and help promote numerous social skills and the feeling of inclusion.

Children are assisted in addressing areas relating to gender, disability, faith and religious beliefs. Children receive non discriminatory support and feel they are all

treated fairly and equally. One young person stated that staff are very supportive of their change to a vegetarian diet and in helping them to understand the importance of getting a balanced diet. Staff practice of administering medication is very good however current practices for managing stock control and recording are not always consistently applied.

Children live in a home that is appropriately located, well designed and maintained to a high standard, despite times when damage is inflicted. Children have chosen the colours of their bedrooms and are able to personalise them, for example with favourite toys and posters. Health and safety arrangements are robust to maintain a safe living environment.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

There are excellent arrangements to safeguard children despite the risky behaviours some of them choose to take at times. Children say they feel very safe and have confidence in the staff team and that if any of their peers are expressing unsafe behaviour staff always protect them. Staff are proactive in safeguarding children, understand their responsibilities and act in accordance with clear procedures, where required.

There are effective links with the Local Authority Designated Officer which ensures children are protected in line with legislation. The home appropriately liaises with Local Safeguarding Children's Board to agree a locally consistent safeguarding policy.

Children benefit from a staff group who are trained and confident in handling safeguarding and child protection concerns or allegations. If a child goes missing staff are proactive in seeking their safe return. Excellent staff practice has resulted in a significant decrease in the number of incidents over the last few months. Children state that there are some bullying issues which are not serious, they report staff act immediately with very good results.

Excellent outcomes are seen as a result of staff encouraging and promoting positive behaviours. Practice is informed by clearly assessed risks which do not impede on children's independence. Staff support and guide children to take responsibility for their actions, to understand the consequences of their actions and how this makes other people feel. As a result the use of physical intervention is minimal. Children state staff are professional when carrying out any intervention and that they feel safe when do intervene.

Excellent attention to health and safety minimises any safety hazards to children. Children understand the importance of the procedures and know, through regular fire drills, how to exit the home quickly in the event of a fire. Children are further protected by the organisation's robust recruitment procedures. Staff appropriately monitor visitors to the home to ensure only suitable and agreed people gain access.

Leadership and management

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

There is a clear management structure in the organisation that supports high staffing levels enabling children to receive individual attention at all times. The home is effectively and efficiently managed by a Registered Manager. She is supported by a deputy manager, service manager and the director who are all actively involved in the home when needed; for example when the manager is on extended leave.

The monitoring of children's care and experiences is exceptional, this ensures practice is safe and the quality of care remains consistently high. A recent organisation wide audit of practice outlines a number of recommendations which are currently being acted upon. This excellent practice is seen as a tool for sustaining improvement and improving outcomes for children. There are no requirements or recommendations to address from the previous inspection.

An excellent Statement of Purpose outlines the aims and objectives of the service. The home is operating in line with this statement and the principles are understood by interested parties, including children. Practice as outlined, is based in psycho-social theory and a therapeutic community approach to care. Staff succeed in meeting the aims of this statement by providing a stable and structured environment for young people. Children benefit from consistent, enthusiastic and committed staff who focus on their individual needs and welfare. Children are happy around the staff team and enjoy their company.

Young people's individual needs in relation to their ethnicity and family backgrounds are considered enabling them to gain an understanding of their lives. There is a commitment to anti-discriminatory practice and fairness to all. Relationships between staff and children are highly professional and respectful.

Staff feel very well supported through regular meetings, supervisions and appraisals. Staff develop through varied training opportunities to progress their careers. The manager and staff team are very well qualified and sufficient in number to meet the needs of the children. These measures ensure practice improves and the focus remains on children's needs and development.

The staffing levels are very good with a mix of genders. Children feel safe and comfortable in staff's presence and spoke very complimentary about them. The close relationships between staff and children are part of the aims of the therapeutic approach and an aim the home achieves to a high standard. The results are such that children feel safe, cared for and develop trusting relationships with excellent outcomes.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.

