

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Liz Driver
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home can accommodate up to seven children and young people aged from six to 17 years. The service aims to accommodate children and young people 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.

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**.

Children and young people receive outstanding levels of care at this setting. They 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 or young person. Practice is based in psycho-social theory and a therapeutic community approach which has resulted in excellent progress for the current children and young people. Positive and meaningful relationships between staff and the children and young people assist them to improve feelings of poor self-esteem and self-worth and to move them forward in their lives.

A therapeutic and comprehensive approach to care planning, assessment and review allows for extremely individualised care programmes to be implemented which meets the specific and changing needs of each child and young person. A culture of safety ensures children and young people are kept as safe as possible and to greatly reduce their risk-taking behaviours. Staff work hard to provide a consistent and committed level of care with an approach that allows children and young people every opportunity to express how they feel in the right way with the correct support.

The senior managers make excellent use of rigorous monitoring systems relating to the quality of care and service development. Together, the Regulation 33 and 34 reports cover all aspects of each regulation but not in the right report; the current Regulation 34 report does not truly evidence how the setting will improve its quality

of care, however the Regulation 33 report does. Overall the monitoring does result in improving outcomes for young people. This is a company that understands its strengths and weaknesses and is ambitious and energetic for continuous improvement. The recent departure of the Registered Manager has had an impact on the children and young people however this is being managed extremely well by the new manager, her deputy and senior staff in the organisation. The recent move to more electronic records has caused some difficulties but the systems are now working well. Some minor shortfalls in the records were identified at this inspection.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- consider reviewing the current format of the Regulation 34 reports to ensure these are fully in line with legislation (NMS 21)
- ensure all records truly reflect the timings of incidents and physical interventions (NMS 21)
- ensure actions highlighted in the building's risks assessment are recorded when completed. (NMS 10)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Children's and young people's life chances are significantly increased at this setting due to the setting's therapeutic approach to care, the high level of specialist input, and excellent working relationships with other professionals.

They receive excellent levels of care and make considerable progress as a result. Children and young people benefit from highly individualised therapeutic support which helps them to grow in confidence, develop their life skills, improve self-esteem and address challenging behaviours. As a result they achieve excellent outcomes across a range of behaviours, taking into account their starting points. Children and young people can focus on achieving their goals through regular informal and formal meetings with key workers. As a result they have ample opportunities to discuss their feelings. Where appropriate this is adapted for younger children ensuring they receive age-appropriate sessions. Ideas of difference are positively promoted with children and young people enabled to appreciate and consider equality and diversity issues within a wholly inclusive environment.

Children and young people make significant progress with their education. They gain from living in an environment where their progress is valued and promoted and their educational outcomes significantly improve. Attendance at school for children and young people is excellent and they benefit from living in an environment where

school attendance and the value of education are embedded in the culture. The staff team work closely with all education provisions to promote the benefits of daily education. The staff team are inspirational in promoting individual potential attainment. Children and young people are encouraged in their endeavours and supported with homework and reading. Younger children enjoy bedtime stories which encourages their interests and imagination.

The views and opinions of children and young people are continually considered and acted upon. The culture of the home is extremely therapeutic with individual and group living needs being central to practice. Such an atmosphere allows children and young people to say and express how they feel easily. Children and young people build excellent relationships with staff that further promotes and supports placement plan objectives. Children and young people 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 and young people respond positively to these meetings as they are sensitively handled by experienced staff. As a result, children and young people are able to confidently and openly express their views and thoughts. Some children and young people remain within the organisation to adulthood. As a result they benefit from consistent support to develop their skills for adulthood. This prepares them well for the next stages in their lives.

Children and young people make excellent use of their leisure time, enjoy holidays and participate in activities in the local community such as youth clubs and local dance groups. As a result, children and young people develop social skills and benefit from new cultural experiences. Children and young people regularly choose their activities helping them to learn to make choices in their lives. Children and young people benefit greatly from having their health needs promoted to a very high standard. In particular they have their emotional and psychological well-being met through the therapeutic approach the company promotes. Specialist therapeutic input is provided at frequencies individual to each child or young person. For example some may have therapy sessions up to three times a week. The excellent care addresses their individual, physical, emotional and mental well-being. Staff support children and young people to achieve excellent outcomes through the individual therapeutic programmes. As a result they progress well emotionally and gain confidence.

Children and young people 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 and young people being able to build stronger relationships with their families and promotes their sense of identity and belonging.

Quality of care

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

Children and young people experience very high quality intervention that is driven by

the organisation's senior managers and directors. Children and young people are at the centre of all staff practice. Children and young people enjoy extremely positive and healthy relationships with staff who are insightful, professional, tenacious, sensitive and caring. Children and young people state that staff are 'brilliant and really do care about us'. Children and young people 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.

Staff skilfully employ therapeutic approaches to support children and young people address any issues in an open and honest atmosphere. Children and young people feel listened to; for example after incidents they can reflect on their actions and record their views either in the group setting or individually with a member of staff. Daily therapeutic group meetings enable children and young people to voice any issues directly to the person, be it another child or a member of staff. It also enables children and young people to discuss any issues arising from the school day so they do not impose negatively on time in the home. Children and young people know how to complain both formally and informally and are confident to do so; although there have been no complaints since 2009. Advocates are sought for children and young people which gives them another avenue to voice any concerns they may have. The home will work tirelessly to ensure a child's voice is listened to with some excellent outcomes seen such as choosing to stay at the setting.

Children and young people are cared for by staff who are highly skilled at applying boundaries that are fair and consistent. This results in excellent parenting skills that many children and young people have not experienced before. Children and young people feel comfortable with staff and respond, in general positively to staff intervention. Staff practice is exceptional in dealing with very challenging behaviours and maximising immediate protection for individuals. Children and young people know why they are at the setting and contribute to placement reviews with support from staff. They 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 and young people.

Individual care plans identify in detail how each child and young person should be supported and what strategies need to be in place in order to help them grow and progress. An extremely comprehensive assessment process is in place to review the needs of children and young people at very regular intervals. Such reviews allow for an excellent holistic and therapeutic review which considers all aspects of individual needs and is an extremely valuable and living document. Each child or young person's identity is valued and any specific needs, whether cultural, religious or related to learning difficulties or conditions, are known and met to an excellent standard.

Children and young people receive exceptional support in their attendance at the most appropriate school and in encouragement to complete home work. Liaison with schools is excellent with daily phone calls, school/home book and direct contact with

teachers at the end of the school day. To further enhance home and school relationships, staff work in school on a regular basis providing increased support to the children, young people and teachers.

Children and young people are assisted in addressing areas relating to gender, disability, faith and religious beliefs. Staff practice is non-discriminatory and all children and young people are treated fairly and with respect. The current age range at the setting is from eight to 14 years of age. The older children are very considerate of the younger children and show caring attitudes and patience when needed, with the guidance and support from staff.

Children and young people receive excellent health care and have their emotional and psychological well-being promoted to a particularly high standard. All required health care needs are implemented such as routine medical appointments and the appropriate storage and administration of medicines. Staff practice of administering medication is robust and safe.

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

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children and young people benefit from a culture of safety that ensures they are kept as safe as possible. Safeguarding children and young people is of paramount importance with extremely efficient systems being implemented effectively in practice. Children and young people say they feel, 'safe' at the home and that if any of their peers are expressing unsafe behaviour staff always protect them. Staff receive child protection training annually and display a robust understanding of key safeguarding issues alongside appreciating the specific vulnerabilities of the young people in their care. A comprehensive recruitment process ensures no staff work with children and young people unless all the required checks have been completed. There are effective links with the Local Authority Designated Officer which ensures children and young people are protected in line with legislation. The home appropriately liaises with Local Safeguarding Children's Board to agree a locally consistent safeguarding policy.

If a child or young person goes missing staff are proactive in seeking their safe return. Excellent staff practice has resulted in a significant decrease in the number of incidents. Children and young people state that there are some bullying issues at times, mainly verbal 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 and young people's independence. Staff support and guide children and young people to take responsibility for their actions, to understand the consequences of their actions and how this makes other people feel. Staff are trained in situations that may require physical intervention, with clear evidence of a decrease in the number taking place for each individual child or young person since they arrived at the setting. At times of distress, and due to things outside children and young people's control, the number of interventions may increase, however these soon decrease again as a result of excellent therapeutic input. Records of interventions are comprehensive, however some do not fully reflect the length of time the actual intervention took place; they cover the start of the challenging behaviour that then led to an intervention and finally through to when the child or young person was calm. Staff display a comprehensive understanding of the need to verbally de-escalate circumstances where children and young people may become angry, upset or frustrated. Staff appreciate the way children and young people cope in such situations and to allow them time and space to consider their feelings appropriately. Children and young people state staff are professional when carrying out any intervention and that they feel safe when they do intervene.

Excellent attention to health and safety minimises any safety hazards to children and young people. They understand the importance of the procedures and know, through regular fire drills, how to exit the home quickly in the event of a fire. A comprehensive and robust approach is in place to address all areas of health and safety. All required tests and servicing takes place in regard to such areas as gas and electrical installations and appliances, with health and safety checks being carried out very regularly. Full environmental and fire risk assessments are completed annually however the most recent environment risk assessment is not supported by clear written evidence that the minor areas highlighted have been addressed. The manager stated they had been addressed.

Leadership and management

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

There is a clear management structure in the organisation that supports high staffing levels enabling children and young people to receive individual attention at all times. The home is effectively and efficiently managed by a manager new in post and who is currently being processed with Ofsted to be registered. She is supported by a deputy manager also new in post, and who has a wealth of managerial experience. Together they have taken the setting through this transition phase with much thought about the impact it has had on the children and young people. As a result the impact has been manageable. The service manager and the director are all actively involved in the home. Appropriately high expectations of standards of practice ensure the culture of the home is vibrant, energetic and child and young person-centred.

An excellent Statement of Purpose, that reflects the recent changes to the staffing group, 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 and young people. 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 children and young people. Children and young people benefit from consistent, enthusiastic and committed staff who focus on their individual needs and welfare. Children and young people are happy around the staff team and enjoy their company.

There were no recommendations or requirements made at the last inspection that needed following up. However the home continues to seek improvement wherever possible and to build on a self-evaluative and positive forward looking approach to continually provide excellent standards of care. Since the last inspection improvements have included moving to electronic recording, introduction of a play coordinator, the development plan that includes changes to the environment, bringing the school and care together more, plans to introduce 'my care plan' for each child and young person, and, soon to be completed, accreditation with The Community of Communities which is a quality improvement and accreditation programme for Therapeutic Communities in the UK and overseas. The required monthly inspections are carried out by an external consultant who spends considerable periods of time with young people and who has clearly built up an excellent rapport with them as a result. The subsequent reports and their findings convey the views and experiences of young people which are fully considered in the home's overall development plan. Regulation 34 reports are carried out and submitted to Ofsted, however they do not fully cover every aspect of the regulation in so far as highlighting how the quality of care can be improved; although this can be seen in the Regulation 33 reports.

A high number of staff are deployed during the day and night to meet the needs of children and young people living at the home. 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 and young people. 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 and young people feel safe and comfortable in staff's presence and spoke very complimentarily 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 and young people feel safe, cared for and develop trusting relationships with excellent outcomes.

A good standard of report writing and record keeping ensures the past, current and future needs of each child or young person are known, reviewed and planned for. The move from paper reports to electronic ones has not been without difficulties but it is being managed well. All children and young people are enabled to participate in their reviews of care and to express their views easily. Extremely detailed reports are provided for statutory reviews with minutes of all reviews being pursued and held on file. Records are in general very well written except those relating to the description of physical interventions as referred to previously in this report. All documentation conveys an up-to-date and accurate picture of each child or young person's life in the

home and the impact the care they receive is having on them. All records are securely stored in the office.

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.