

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Kevin Whatley
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This is a privately owned children's home that is registered to accommodate three young people who have emotional and or behavioural 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 **good**.

Young people are provided with good standards of care, support and guidance and make good progress. Care planning and review is of a high standard and promotes the individual needs of young people. Young people and social workers comment positively on the way the home is run and standards of care.

Young people benefit from meaningful relationships with staff, which helps them to improve their self-esteem and develop a positive view. Young people say that they are helped to reduce their risk-taking behaviours and confirm that they are listened to. The views of young people clearly influence the day-to-day running of the home and they are made to feel an important part of it.

The home is good at keeping young people safe and staff respond swiftly and appropriately to unacceptable behaviour. Young people say they feel 'safe and looked after'. When necessary the home appropriately challenge the views of other care professionals to ensure the vulnerabilities of young people are continually considered despite them having permission to stay away from the home.

Young people live in a home that provides a good standard of accommodation. The staff team work hard to provide consistently good standards of care and meet the individual needs of young people. The home is managed well with the Registered Manager and her deputy providing sound leadership. The strengths and weaknesses of care provision are known and addressed, with aspirations to improve further.

Two recommendations are made as a result of this inspection. Although young people actively contribute their views, which are mainly well evidenced in written

records, one section of a review report was left blank. The approach toward managing the negative behaviours of young people is good and leads to a reduction in problematic behaviours, including violence. However, the occasional use of locking of doors during incidents must be kept under close review as this could be seen as a restriction of liberty.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure the home regularly reviews incidents of challenging behaviour, examines trends or issues emerging from this, to enable staff to reflect and learn to inform future practice; in particular the locking of doors as an intervention strategy (NMS 3.21)
- ensure all young people communicate their views on all aspects of their care and support; in particular that the occasions where young people do not wish to comment is confirmed in writing, such as within review reports. (NMS 1.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Outcomes for young people are good. Young people benefit from individualised programmes of care and from a committed staff team who work hard to attain the best for them.

Young people receive focused care which enables them to gain a greater positive self-view and develop stronger emotional resilience. Young people who moved in to the home with extremely low levels of self-esteem have been able to grow within the environment. A similar approach supports young people to make progress in their education, although some find regular attendance more difficult.

Young people are encouraged to develop their independent and personal living skills. Individual programmes encourage them to develop their skills at a pace they can achieve. Where young people are struggling to meet their targets or incentives innovative actions are taken to ensure they do not feel their goals are unachievable. For example breaking their specific targets down throughout the day rather than assessing them at one point. This has led to young people meeting a large number of their daily goals and thus gaining a sense of achievement.

Young people benefit from extremely good support to maintain appropriate contact with family, friends and other people who are important to them. Young people have mobile telephones for their personal use and have ready access to the home's telephone. This ensures that the young people can make and receive calls at any

time, including when they are away from the home. One social worker noted how impressed they were of staff who had worked extremely hard to assist a young person and a parent to re-establish contact. This has enabled the relationship to develop significantly from a very poor starting point.

Quality of care

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

Young people receive a good quality of care, benefiting from meaningful and positive relationships with staff and make good progress as a result.

The views of young people are promoted and valued. Young people say are listened to and that the things they are told about actually happen. For instance one young person said their wishes for the colour and decor of their bedroom was put in place before they moved in. Interactions between staff and young people were observed to be open and relaxed. Regular house meetings allow young people opportunities to contribute to the running of the home such as the weekly meal choices. Regular key work sessions offer another avenue for young people to express how they feel and develop trusting relationships with staff.

A comprehensive programme of care planning ensures that young people have their specific needs met. Their cultural needs are fully assessed and incorporated into plans of care. Such plans match the overall aims of the placement and guide staff in how best to care for young people. Care plans are compiled to a high standard and are regularly reviewed. Reviews of care take place with young people offered opportunities to influence the decisions made about them. One review report did not confirm the views of the young person concerned as they had refused to comment; therefore this section was left blank. On this occasion the young person consulted with the independent reviewing officer instead.

Staff actively promote each young person's education within a culture that supports and encourages learning. The home offer on-site education with good communication between the education and care staff ensuring a joint approach to learning. Some young people attend education in the local community when this better matches their educational needs. Where this is the case staff maintain regular contact with schools or colleges to ensure that progress and communication about specific issues are shared promptly.

Young people have their health care needs met well. A comprehensive approach to addressing their physical, emotional and psychological needs ensures young people are provided with individualised care. Health care plans are completed which provide a clear overview of need and how these are to be met by staff. All young people are registered with local doctors, opticians and dentists and are assisted to attend appointments as and when required. Close liaison is kept with external health care providers such as the looked after children nursing team and –child and adolescent mental health service. This enables young people to receive focused support. For example assisting staff to work with young people on maintaining appropriate sexual

health and ensuring prescribed medicines are routinely reviewed.

Young people are enabled to take part in positive and enriching activities. Regular trips are made to the local community which allows young people to develop their self-esteem and confidence. Aside from a variety of opportunities, including swimming and gym membership, the home also take young people on holidays. This has been particularly beneficial for the young people in developing positive relationships with members of staff.

Young people live in a home that offers them a good standard of accommodation. Young people are encouraged to personalise their rooms and do so with posters and pictures. The home is well maintained and offers a comfortably and homely environment.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

A robust approach toward safeguarding ensures young people are kept as safe as possible. Young people say they feel safe living at the home and are given significant support and guidance to address their particular issues. Young people are cared for by staff who have been deemed suitable to look after them. Strict recruitment procedures ensure all required checks are completed before staff begin work.

The protection of young people is given an appropriately high priority within the home. All staff receive child protection training and display a good understanding of key protocols and procedures. When necessary the home liaises closely with the Local Children Safeguarding Board and placing authorities to ensure a joined up approach to keeping young people safe. This includes appropriately challenging the level of risk other professionals deem young people to be in, irrespective of their actions being seen of their own choosing.

The home work hard to assist young people to address their most negative behaviours. Appropriate and firm boundaries are in place which encourage young people to behave well. Young people who arrive at the home with issues of offending behaviour are provided with encouragement and support to comply with the legal consequences of their actions. This includes ensuring they attend appointments with the youth offending service and staff challenging any pro-offending attitudes. Comprehensive risk assessments and individualised strategies take a full account of the young people's specific needs. As a result young people make progress reducing their challenging behaviours; notably aggression, self-harm and violence. One social worker commented that the young person had made significant progress in reducing their negative behaviours since moving in; this was said to be particularly impressive given their poor starting point.

Young people live in an environment where the use of physical restraint is kept to a minimum. Staff are trained in the use of restraint and only intervene when absolutely necessary; the level of restraint is low. To ensure restraint is only used as a last

result alternative strategies are implemented, including de-escalation and for certain young people the brief locking of the kitchen door. This particular approach has been successful in reducing the propensity for the destruction of the home's property and food items. In turn such young people are enabled to think about their actions and are able to calm quicker with staff support. Although used sparingly the locking of any door poses the risk of restricting the liberty of the young person concerned and other young people living in the home.

The home adopts a suitable approach to addressing the occasions when young people leave the home without permission. Very few incidents have taken place where young people have actually gone missing. Staff are clear when to report young people as missing to the police and do so when required. Young people who choose to stay away from the home, with the permission of their placing authority and parent, are provided with high levels of staff support to ensure they are safe during these periods.

Young people live in a home that is physically safe with health and safety matters being appropriately addressed. Regular tests are completed on gas and electrical appliances in the home, while the servicing and testing of fire safety equipment occurs regularly. Fire drills carried out each month ensure young people and staff alike know what to do in the event of a fire.

Leadership and management

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

The home is well run with staff being provided with good support, guidance and training to meet the needs of young people. The strengths and weaknesses of the setting are known by a management team who are efficient and effective. The requirement and recommendation made at the last inspection have both been addressed with improvements made in a number of areas. This includes a more stable staff team where their deployment to other homes within the organisation has been significantly reduced. Placing social workers comment positively on the manner the home is run citing, 'extremely good communication' as a particular strength.

A suitable complaints process is followed in practice. When issues arise the home works collaboratively with all parties concerned to bring about appropriate outcomes. Very few issues have arisen since the last inspection and none of significant concern; no complaints have been made by young people.

Good numbers of staff are employed to work at the home. Young people benefit from the care of a committed and enthusiastic staff team who understand their specific needs. Staff receive regular supervision and a good standard of training which matches their own learning and developmental requirements. The organisation support staff in gaining the required qualifications in care and management. As a result young people are looked after by a staff team who are kept up to date with current models of best practice and intervention. Staff said they really enjoyed working at the home and confirmed they are well guided to carry out their tasks.

The home is suitably monitored to ensure it continues to provide appropriate standards of care. The Registered Manager completes reviews and utilises the findings to further understand the areas of practice which work well or less so. Monthly inspection visits are completed by the organisation that are suitably objective and ensure all aspects of the operation of the home are routinely considered. Such inspections include consultation with young people and those responsible for their care.

In general the home maintains a high standard of records. As noted previously one minor shortfall was identified in not completing a section of a review report; this did not have a negative impact on the young person in question. All required paperwork was in place for the young people including those required from the placing authorities.

All significant events are forwarded to Ofsted as required. No issues were identified that should have been notified with a pro-active approach to keeping Ofsted suitably informed of any on-going concerns.

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.