

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Liz Driver
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is registered to provide care for up to six young females who experience emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home is part of a private company which has an independent fostering agency, a total of three residential homes and an independent 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 **good**.

Young people receive an excellent quality of care at this setting resulting in good outcomes. They 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 young person. Positive and meaningful relationships between staff and young people assist them to improve feelings of poor self-esteem and self-worth and to move them forward in their lives.

A culture of safety ensures young people are kept as safe as possible and are highly supported to greatly reduce their risk-taking behaviours. The staff group encourages young people to take responsibility for their lives and behaviour and is keen for them to make good progress while in placement. Young people feel well protected by the service.

The staff group is skilled and the leadership of the home is excellent. The manager makes excellent use of rigorous monitoring systems relating to the quality of care and service development. Overall the monitoring systems 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. Over the last year there have been clear and improved outcomes for young people.

This inspection notes some areas for improvement. These include: ensuring the reviewed sanction system is clear, reasonable and fair and understood by all staff and children; ensuring staff have access to support and advice, particularly in

relation to holding regular team meetings and the development of further life history work with young people so they gain an improved understanding of their background.

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 sanction system is clear, reasonable and fair and understood by all staff and children (NMS 3.8)
- ensure staff have access to support and advice particularly in relation to regular team meetings (NMS 19.4)
- support children's emotional development by considering carrying out life history work with children so they gain an improved understanding of their background. (NMS 2.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Outcomes for young people at this home are, in general, good. On admission outcomes in areas such as education and behaviours may be poor but with the strong staff team setting robust boundaries and providing high levels of support these outcomes change. Over time young people significantly improve in numerous areas of their lives. Staff encourage young people to develop their self-esteem, consider themselves to be individuals of value and develop a positive self-view. This is essential as most of the young people have traumatic backgrounds which have had a negative impact on their self-belief. Young people have access to some images around the home which reflect different cultures. Although there is scope for further development in this area, this means that young people are able to develop a positive self-view, emotional resilience and a knowledge and understanding of their background.

Young people benefit from highly individualised care and support which helps them to: grow in confidence; develop their life skills; experience an improvement in their self-esteem and address their more challenging behaviours. Young people can focus on achieving their goals through regular informal and formal meetings with link workers. As a result they have ample opportunities to discuss their feelings. Ideas of difference are positively promoted with young people enabled to appreciate and consider equality and diversity issues within a wholly inclusive environment. Young people commented, 'the home is helping me to get confidence and get back into school.' 'I like it here' 'we are treated fairly.'

Young people make good progress in their education. For some young people this

can take time but with the support and encouragement of the staff team they do eventually engage in appropriate education and achieve good results. Staff strive to ensure all young people receive education that is appropriate to their needs and liaise closely with all agencies to ensure good outcomes. Attendance at school for young people is, in general, good and improving. Young people can expect the staff team to work closely with all education provisions to promote the benefits of daily education. The staff team are good in promoting individual's potential attainment. Young people develop positive views about education which has resulted in individuals requesting to resit an educational year so they can gain improved academic qualifications for their future careers.

The organisation runs and manages a school that offers educational and learning support services to young people who have emotional and behavioural issues. Young people benefit greatly from this specialised educational resource that expertly meets their educational and learning needs. Young people make very good progress in this aspect of their development. This is a very different position from where some young people were educationally prior to placement at the home.

Health care is of a very good standard with all young people having access to a local doctor, dentist and optician. Young people engage in a wide range of specific and specialist health provision that is provided by professionals external to the home. Staff support young people at all appointments. Health promotion is keenly delivered daily at every opportunity especially in relation to sexual health matters.

Young people engage in a range of activities outside the home such as trips out that have an educational focus, shopping and working locally after school and at weekends. Young people are able to participate in an impressive programme of activities to cover the school summer holidays. They can also access the company's school summer activity programme that is, for the first year, providing activities twice a week. Staff have also arranged for young people to gain work experience as a result of innovative planning and action. Young people are encouraged to be as independent as possible; for example, by using public transport. At the appropriate age young people have good transition plans in place to prepare them for adult life. There are clear achievable targets in place with incentives to underpin the work towards young people gaining independent living skills. These cover a range of skills that will be needed in adult life such as cooking, shopping and budgeting and are appropriate to individual capabilities. Young people also benefit from support and guidance in life skills training in relation to becoming a mother, where relevant.

Young people are supported to maintain contact with family and friends. Staff are extremely sensitive to young people's emotional experiences in relation to contact. Much support is given prior to contact and following contact. Individual files contain up to date information about contact details with restrictions also noted so staff can keep them safe.

Young people's behaviours, in the main, have improved with a decrease in the number of incidents, notifications of serious incidents, physical interventions, incidents of missing young people and child protection referrals; this decrease is seen

throughout individual's records.

Young people clearly have a voice in the running of the home and in their futures. They feel they are listened to and changes are made as a result of their views, opinions and wishes. Regular link worker sessions enable young people to build very good relationships with dedicated members of staff and to be well informed of placement objectives. Young people are encouraged and supported to attend their placement reviews and to express their views and wishes about their current and future lives.

Quality of care

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

Young people receive high quality care that is driven by a strong Registered Manager and experienced staff team. Young people enjoy extremely positive and healthy relationships with staff who are insightful, professional, tenacious, sensitive and caring. Young people state that staff 'really do care about us.' The therapeutic approach ensures young people's feelings, views and wishes are considered to a high standard. Young people fully contribute to the running of the home with input into areas such as food and activity planning.

Young people live within a highly supportive and nurturing environment. Care plans, which are regularly reviewed, clearly identify individual needs that staff can work together with the young people to meet. Relationships between staff and young people are very amiable and highly constructive. Staff are aware of the group dynamics in the home and are on hand to de-escalate any potential issues. Staff are skilled at applying boundaries that are fair and consistent. 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. If any young person goes missing the staff work very closely with other professionals to ensure a safe return. Much work is carried out to provide young people with the skills to keep safe while in the home and when out in the community.

Information is made available to the young people so they know how, and to whom, they can make a complaint. They confirmed they know how the process works. All complaints are taken seriously with a robust investigation carried out in close liaison with other professionals, if required, and outcomes are relayed back to the complainant.

At times young people's behaviour can affect placement objectives and targets but the staff work hard to put in different strategies and firm boundaries to bring the young people back on track. This is often achieved with the support of other agencies. Access to services appropriate for individual young people enables their physical, emotional and psychological health needs to be met. There is a clear and strong commitment to developing practices and knowledge to further improve outcomes for young people.

Each young person's identity is valued and any specific needs, whether cultural, religious or related to learning difficulties or other conditions, are known and met to an excellent standard. Young people are assisted in addressing areas relating to gender, disability, faith and religious beliefs.

Staff are proactive and consistent in supporting educational achievements. Young people receive high levels of support to ensure they attend school and barriers to educational progress and achievement are challenged and positively addressed. Additional school tuition is sought for young people to gain further skills, such as learning additional languages. Staff to liaise with schools and all records relating to education are kept in very good order.

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's practice when administering medication is robust and safe.

Young people live in a home that is appropriately located, well designed and maintained to a high standard. Young people are extremely respectful of their home. Both staff and young people take pride in the home.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people benefit from a culture of safety that ensures they are kept as safe as possible. Safeguarding young people is of paramount importance with extremely efficient systems being implemented effectively in practice. 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 and display a sound 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 young people unless all the required checks have been completed. Both managers of the home and young people are involved in the staff recruitment process. There are effective links with the Local Authority Designated Officer which ensures young people are protected in line with legislation. Young people's case files evidence comprehensive, updated risk assessments and behaviour management strategies to help minimise known risks. Staff maintain meticulous records of critical incidents, which managers monitor carefully.

If a young person goes missing staff are proactive in seeking their safe return. There are effective policies and protocols in place to address young people who are absent from the home without permission or are deemed missing. The organisation's written policies in relation to this have been shared with the host local authority and police teams, as specified in the national minimum standards. Young people are aware of such protocols and understand they are in place for their own protection. Excellent

staff practice has resulted in a significant decrease in the number of incidents. Young people state that there are some bullying issues at times. These are mainly verbal in nature and 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 young people's independence. Staff support and guide young people to take responsibility for their actions, to understand the consequences of their actions and to understand how this makes other people feel. Staff are trained in dealing with situations that may require physical intervention; there has been a decrease in the numbers of situations needing this intervention. Staff understand the way young people cope in difficult and challenging situations and allow them time and space to consider their feelings appropriately.

The home has recently reviewed the sanctions framework. While the home's sanctions were devised to meet the group needs of the previous residents and these were effective in reducing their absence, they are not appropriate for the group presently living in the home. The registered manager has highlighted this and has implemented progressive discussions, through team consultation sessions, to enable the team to embrace the restorative justice system that is being introduced within the host area. This will provide a more dynamic approach to sanctioning within the home and will enable staff and young people to find positive strategies to focus on behaviour modification, ownership of behaviour and positive change. This area is identified as a target within the home's development plan.

The home is robust in dealing with concerns around potential or actual behaviours of sexual exploitation. Staff recognise the extreme risks this poses for young people and work industriously with young people and key professionals to minimise these risks.

Excellent attention to health and safety minimises any safety hazards to young people. Young people 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 and health and safety checks are carried out very regularly.

Leadership and management

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

Overall, the leadership and management of the service are outstanding and the home is very well run. The manager demonstrates a strong commitment to continue to make improvements to the service provision and promote positive outcomes for young people.

There is a clear management structure that supports high staffing levels thus enabling young people to receive attention at all times. Young people and staff feel

the management of the home is effective and that the home is well run. The home's Registered Manager has extensive residential childcare, management and training experience and relevant formal qualifications. She is supported by two deputy managers and an experienced and strong staff team. 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 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 the young people. Young people benefit from consistent, enthusiastic and committed staff who focus on their individual needs and welfare. Young people are very happy around the staff team and clearly enjoy their company. The young people's guide contains key information for prospective and actual residents and outlines what to expect from the services, their rights and also details the house rules. The guide is creative, well written and geared towards young people's use

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 builds on a self-evaluative and positive forward looking approach to continually provide excellent standards of care. The home has effective monitoring mechanisms in place that are continually being reviewed. The Registered Manager regularly and proactively monitors the quality of care provided. The home's Regulation 34 monitoring system has been further developed and shows how the service has improved the quality of care and how it can be improved further. A childcare consultant conducts monthly, unannounced monitoring visits in line with Regulation 33. Subsequent monitoring reports are detailed and have again developed over the last few months. They provide an excellent report for the service and Ofsted to gain a clear overview of how the service is functioning. At the same time these monitoring systems act to identify strengths and weaknesses of the service and assist service development and improvement which can be seen in the home's development plan.

The home's very good staffing levels meet the needs of young people as outlined in the Statement of Purpose and staff have access to a good range of relevant and quality training opportunities. Overall, the staff group is very experienced, highly skilled and well qualified. The staff team has an excellent mix of gender, age and ethnicity.

Young people's individual needs in relation to their ethnicity and family backgrounds are fully considered. Policies and procedures comprehensively address equality and diversity. There is a commitment to anti-discriminatory practice and fairness to all. Relationships between staff and young people are professional and respectful. Staff are very well informed of individual needs relating to race, religion, sexuality, and ethnicity. There are consistent working practices which focus on enhancing young people's quality of life, so young people receive support to take pride in themselves and develop a positive identity. Young people are encouraged to be positive about

themselves and supported to achieve their individual goals. When times are difficult for young people staff do not give up supporting them.

Overall, staff receive excellent support to address the needs of young people although staff team meetings have not been as regular as they could be. The Registered Manager is aware of this and is taking action to address it. Staff do receive much support and guidance through team consultations with a consultant psychiatrist on a regular basis, regular supervision and yearly appraisals.

The unit's development plan is checked and updated every two months, or items are added when action needed is identified. It is a working document that staff are fully informed of. Themes covered range across training, life skills, restorative justice, the sanctions framework, the development of the garden, communication, updating systems and improving quality.

An excellent standard of report writing and record keeping ensures the past, current and future needs of each young person are known, reviewed and planned for. All young people are enabled to participate in their reviews of care and helped to express their views easily. 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.