

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Simon Morley
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This is a privately owned children's home. It is registered to provide accommodation for up to four children and young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. When young people need additional support to move into more independent living they can stay at the home after they are 18.

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**.

Since the last full inspection stronger leadership and management arrangements have led to better outcomes in particular with regards to the safety of children and young people. A sustained improvement to the admissions process ensures children and young people living in the home have more compatible needs. As a result the overall effectiveness of the home has improved and is now judged to be good.

The adequate judgement for outcomes reflects the difficulty in engaging children and young people who have a sustained history of poor patterns of behaviour prior to admission. Despite the continued efforts of staff there are shortfalls in some outcomes. This is with regard to: the level some young people engage in health services, take responsibility for their health and reduce risk taking behaviours, prepare for independence and engage in positive social and leisure activities. In contrast other children and young people living in the home make good progress in all aspects of their welfare.

Staff are committed and enthusiastic. They provide children and young people with a good quality of support to help them achieve a range of positive outcomes in their lives. Children and young people enjoy living in a homely and friendly environment where they are safe. Staff practice in safeguarding children and young is effective and takes into account their different needs and vulnerabilities.

The manager of the home works hard to implement and sustain improvements based on the needs and progress of all individual children and young people. There are

minor breaches to regulations with regard to required monitoring reports. This has not impacted on children and young people's welfare. The quality of training and supervision ensure staff are competent and experienced in looking after children and young people. As a result the manager and staff make a positive difference in children and young people's lives.

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
33 (2001)	ensure the person carrying out these visits interviews, with their consent and in private, children accommodated there, their parents and relatives (Regulation 33 (4) (a))	31/07/2013
34 (2001)	ensure reports written for the purpose of this regulation include consultation with children accommodated in the home, their parents and placing authorities. (Regulation 34 (3))	30/08/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure children's physical, emotional and psychological health is promoted and they access services to meet their needs (NMS 6)
- ensure children pursue individual interests, hobbies and leisure activities to develop their confidence and skills (NMS 7)
- ensure children receive care which helps prepare and support them into adulthood. (NMS 12)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **adequate**.

Children and young people have improved their school attendance and now regularly attend on a full time basis. This is a significant achievement compared to when they first came to live in the home.

Improvements are also made with educational achievements, for example progress

with children's reading, writing and numeracy skills. Similarly young people improve with regard to their attendance and achievements in further education.

Children and young people vary with regard to how involved they are in social and leisure activities in the community. Some benefit well from a wide range of pursuits including fishing, golf, trips to museums, football, cooking and joining in the local youth club. As a result these children and young people develop their skills, confidence and self-esteem. This is in stark contrast to young people who spend a lot of time away from the home and staff supervision. In this case returning to previously established networks linked to patterns of substance misuse is damaging future prospects of good health and economic well-being.

Children and young people learn to negotiate appropriate boundaries and are included in decisions about their care. This helps children and young people of all ages and needs to be more confident in asking for what they want, sharing their views, wishes and feelings. Children and young people also make significant progress in improving their behaviour and risks of offending behaviour are reduced.

Most children and young people learn to develop better, healthier lifestyles and understand the importance of looking after their health. Generally risks to health from smoking, alcohol and substance misuse are avoided by children and young people but not in all cases. Some young people find it hard to progress in this regard. Likewise some children and young people take part in frequent exercise and engage with particular health services to meet their specific needs. This protects and promotes their physical and emotional health. Other young people compromise their health by not engaging in such health promoting strategies.

Children and young people do learn new skills and develop independence in age appropriate ways that reflect their individual needs. For example with self care, telling the time, using public transport, budgeting, shopping and cooking. Some children and young people benefit more from these opportunities than others who do not engage with the support that is available.

Quality of care

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

Staff provide a good quality of care to young people regardless of their individual care needs and challenging behaviour. This is evident in the persistence of staff in developing warm, caring relationships with children and young people of different ages, backgrounds and needs. Staff treat children and young people as individuals, are open, honest and respectful towards them. Children and young people said 'it is good here' and are clearly comfortable in being themselves.

Detailed care plans and quality of care practice helps promote children and young people's well-being and reflects their diverse needs based on age, race, understanding lifestyle choices and vulnerability. There is good attention to individual needs, for example support with education, physical and emotional health, making

new friends, learning to make appropriate choices and improving behaviour. Children and young people are at the centre of what goes on in the home. They have a say in their care, home improvements, daily routines, activities, menu planning and are free to choose how to spend their time.

Staff provide children and young people with consistent structure, routines and boundaries, helping to promote good behaviour and personal safety. This has helped reduce the amount and intensity of children and young people's outbursts and improves their relationships with friends and family. Parents commented 'cannot fault the manager or staff' and 'he gets on better with his siblings.'

Staff promote positive outcomes for children and young people through regular meetings and good communication with parents, social workers and other stakeholders. This helps ensure care for children and young people is regularly reviewed in line with their changing needs, views and wishes. This is reflected in comments from stakeholders 'staff have helped him progress with his education, behaviour, routines and health' and 'always kept informed of what is going on.'

Staff build and develop strong partnerships with a range of different support agencies to help meet the individual needs of children and young people. This includes the police, schools, further education establishments and health services. In particular effective work with police community support officers has reduced the risks to children and young people of offending.

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 safe, homely environment created by friendly, caring staff. Safety is given a high priority and strategies reflect the diverse needs of children and young people living at the home. This includes for example, keeping young people safe who stay away from the home overnight, providing a safe environment to test boundaries, promoting road safety and forming appropriate, safe friendships.

As well as being protected, children and young people benefit from opportunities to take age appropriate risks as part of their growing up and developing their independence. Examples include; using public transport, taking individual responsibility for pursuing their further education and developing trust to play out in the local community without getting into trouble. Risk management is a very thorough part of the protection and safety strategies used. Risks are regularly reviewed to keep safety measures up to date with children and young people's needs and progress.

Staff use individual behaviour management strategies effectively to help children and young people improve their behaviour and develop more appropriate social skills. Over time children and young people respond well to this and various sanctions staff use to address inappropriate behaviour. These are aimed at teaching children and

young people how to resolve conflict constructively. Staff are reflective on whether these measures work or not to avoid treating children and young people institutionally. There is good practice in avoiding physical intervention as a means of behaviour management. Physical intervention is rarely ever used and even then only as a last resort to protect the safety of children and young people. This helps promote a safe and caring environment for children and young people to live in.

Staff working closely with other safeguarding agencies to protect children and young people when they do not return to the home. Good quality, effective safeguarding strategies ensures children and young people return home safely. The actions of staff reduce risks to children and young people from their absences and the frequency they are absent from the home.

The registered provider follows thorough recruitment procedures ensuring staff employed to work in the home are suitable people to be working with vulnerable children and young people.

Leadership and management

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

The home is well managed with the aim to secure positive outcomes for all children and young people. Management arrangements continue to improve for example with new in-depth monthly monitoring which includes a strong focus on children and young people's progress. A new post has been created to add to the home's management team. It is too soon to judge the impact of these recent changes on children and young people. The manager responds well to inspection and is committed to continuous improvement for the benefit of children and young people.

The manager's quality assurance includes regular consultation with children, young people their parents and placing authorities. However it is not clear and transparent how their views influence care practice and bring about change. Evidence for this is more anecdotal rather than documented in required monitoring reports. Likewise monitoring reports by the registered provider frequently lack children and young people's views about their care. These regulatory shortfalls are minimised by the degree staff engage with children and young people on a daily basis ensuring their views are listened to.

The manager and registered provider ensure children and young people benefit from staff that are trained and competent to meet their needs. Staff receive regular, effective supervision and training including induction training and achievement of qualifications. The manager also ensures staff keep up to date with best practice guidance for example with exploitation and children and young people missing from home. As a result staff are experienced and effective in providing a high quality of care to meet the individual needs of all children and young people.

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.