

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Dawn Bennett
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home provides care and accommodation for up to five young people of either gender who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home is owned by a private company.

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 making good progress in various aspects of their lives. Staff deliver individualised and consistent care to young people through their daily working practice. They provide the consistency and support young people need to stabilise behaviour, established productive routines, engage in positive activities, learn independence skills and prepare for transition to the responsibilities of adulthood.

Young people develop an excellent awareness of their personal safety and make significant progress in reducing their harm-taking behaviours. The home's safety practices are robust and well documented. Young people talk positively about living in the home and state that they feel safe. Staff place considerable importance on supporting young people to take proportionate risks while prioritising their safety and well-being. They recognise the particular vulnerabilities of the young people they look after. When high risk incidents do occur staff work effectively in partnership with other agencies to achieve safe outcomes.

As a result of this inspection two requirements have been made for improvements relating to the home's environment and vehicles.

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
31 (2001)	ensure that all parts of the children's home used by children are of sound construction, kept in good structural repair, reasonably decorated and maintained (regulation 31 (2) (d) (e))	30/11/2013
11 (2001)	ensure the home is conducted in a manner which respects the dignity of children accommodated there. This specifically relates to the home's vehicle. (regulation 11 (2) (b))	31/10/2013

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people are making good progress in the home because of well-planned personalised care and support from the committed and competent staff team. As a result, they are forming and sustaining positive attachments with staff and make good progress in developing emotional resilience. A social worker stated about a young person they support 'He has made vast improvements in all areas of his life.'

Young people are in good emotional and physical health. They lead healthy lifestyles, enjoying nutritious diets and lots of physical activities. As well as identifying and responding to specific health needs, the staff team also give good advice, support and guidance on a wide range of health topics. This is often undertaken in partnership with other professionals such as education, therapists and youth offending services. Young people understand the importance of good health. They attend medical appointments and stop or moderate their unhealthy habits. As a result young people have successfully lost weight, stopped taking drugs and reduced smoking.

Young people are active and constructively occupied. The routine of the house and ethics role modelled by staff promotes opportunity and participation. All young people have good attendance at education or college and are making adequate to good educational progress. Some young people have regular jobs or undertake voluntary work in the local community. For example, a paper round for six days a week and dog walking at a local RSPCA centre. Young people are actively involved in the local community through friends, girlfriends, clubs and activities. All young people have different hobbies and interests, which range from being a member of a football club, weekly horse riding lessons to playing on their x-box.

Young people have a good range of independence skills ready for when they leave the home. Each young person works towards developing skills appropriate to their age and understanding. For example, young people learn to manage their money, open bank accounts, save and budget for their weekly activities and food shopping.

A young person stated 'Staff help me prepare for when I will live on my own. Things like paying bills and being able to cook and keep a house clean.' Staff are skilled at judging their level of involvement in tasks to maximise young people's abilities whilst also ensuring each task is successfully and enjoyably completed. A family member stated the young person 'is being taught independence skills and enjoys doing them with staff.'

Quality of care

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

Staff have good knowledge and understanding of young people's individual needs and backgrounds. They identify and address the diverse and complex needs of young people, both in daily living and placement planning. Consequently, young people make good progress in most aspects of their lives.

Young people successfully sustain and develop relationships with their birth family and with wider support networks. When young people are unhappy with contact arrangements made by the placing authority, staff will support them understand their rights. All young people have access to the Children's Rights team and their independent reviewing officers. The staff work effectively in partnership with family members. One stated 'staff and management work closely with me and take any actions (relating to the young person) with agreement from myself.' As young people settle at the home they make and maintain friendships in the local community through work, leisure activities and schooling.

The standard of accommodation is adequate. The house is an old building. There is a rolling programme of refurbishment and some work has been completed since the last inspection. For example, new windows are gradually being fitted throughout. The staff team and young people work hard to make it feel homely. The Registered Manager and quality assurance visits highlight to the organisation where work needs to be completed to improve standards. However, issues raised are not being quickly addressed by the organisation. Carpets are worn throughout the house. One young person's bedroom has lino flooring instead of carpeting. Repairs need to be completed to ceilings in some downstairs rooms. Furniture in the games room is institutional and not homely. The decoration in some young people's bedrooms is worn and not personal to them. This does not help create an environment that young people and staff feel proud of.

The house has two company cars. One of these has over a period of time sustained significant damage to its exterior panels. To the point that nearly all the panels are dented. This makes it and it's passenger's very conspicuous when out in public and does not promote young people's dignity or sense of self-worth.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people's safety is a priority in this home. A family member stated the staff are 'very committed to ensuring the safety of young people at all times.' Young people acknowledge the importance of feeling and being safe. Staff regularly review and update young people's risk assessments and identified risks are addressed through appropriate preventive measures. Their effective safeguarding practice enables young people to take proportionate risks as part of their growth and development. This includes young people working and developing relationships in the community.

Where young people exhibit high risk behaviours they are quickly addressed. Where appropriate, in line with regulations or protocols, staff will notified other agencies, professionals and family members. They then work effectively with them to safeguard the young person in their best interests. Incidents of missing from care are low at this home. However, a young person new to the service went missing over a number of days. The home responded quickly and appropriately. They continued to try and contact the young person passing any new information to the police. On the young person's safe return, they ensured there was someone independent to talk to, and make sure the young person was safe and well.

When young people exhibit high risk behaviours the staff use assessments of risk to implement firm boundaries and strategies to safeguard themselves, others and the young person. Such strategies will include room searches, increasing staff supervision, appointing night waking staff and supervised spending of money. All these strategies are monitored by the Registered Manager to ensure their continuing appropriateness and effectiveness.

Young people know how to make a complaint and are confident in using this process. The Registered Manager and staff team take all complaints seriously and fully involve young people throughout the process. Staff also produce transparent and clear records to show complaints being effectively managed and resolved. This shows young people that their views and wishes are listened to and acted on.

Staff are good at identifying potentially conflicting situations between young people and intervene effectively and appropriately. They use individualised positive behaviour strategies to support young people in managing their emotions and integrate considerably with other residents in the home. As a result, positive relationships and attachments have developed over time and young people learn to self-regulate their emotions and better improve their behaviour. A social worker stated 'the home is very much his safe place. He has his blips. However, when incidents occur they sort them out. They are calm and practical. This placement was the best thing that could of happened for him.'

Young people become responsible citizens. They understand the importance of attending and engaging in appointments and meetings that relate to previous misdemeanours. A key strength of this service is the partnership work they undertake with the police, local authorities and youth offending services. They promote the importance of young people complying with conditions set by court. As a result young people make positive progress. For example, a young person is going

back to court for an early revocation. This is 6 months early and on his youth offending worker's recommendations.

Leadership and management

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

This service was last inspected in February 2013. At this interim inspection it was judged to be making good progress.

One recommendation was made and has been met at this inspection.

The Registered Manager is a strong and effective leader. She leads by example and communicates effectively with families and partnership agencies. Staffing levels are appropriate to meeting the needs of the young people placed. Staff receive good induction and relevant training. They feel well supported and as a team provide consistency and stability to young people. They are motivated and committed to giving positive experiences and achieving good outcomes for young people.

Young people benefit from working with a well-informed and committed staff team. The Registered Manager makes good use of a range of monitoring activities relating to quality of care. This includes gathering the views of family members, professionals and young people about their experience of the home. This helps her understand the strengths and weaknesses of the home. Feedback is particularly positive about the quality of the staff team. A young person stated 'the staff team really go that extra mile.' They are professional and understand the home's systems, policies and procedures. They maintain good quality records which contribute to an understanding of young people's backgrounds, experiences, progress and future plans.

The manager ensures that detailed individualised placement plans are in place for each young person. Staff and young people regularly review the plans, which clearly outline individual needs and focus on clear measurable outcomes. This ensures young people's progress and development is effectively monitored to evidence improvement. Where plans are not in place, meeting are not arranged or a young person is without a named social worker appropriate action is taken by the manager in addressing this with the placing authority.

There is a Statement of Purpose which informs young people, their families and placing authorities the services provided by the home. There is a guide for young people which contains all the contact numbers which they may need.

The Registered Manager notifies all significant events relating to the protection of young people to the relevant authorities.

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.