

Inspection report for children's home

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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is a two-bedded children's home providing services for young people in crisis between 10 and 18 years of age. It is run by a private company and education is provided on site for young people of school age by a qualified tutor.

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**.

Young people receive outstanding care. Communication processes are strong and effective. There is a strong belief that all young people can fulfil their potential. These processes and strengths contribute to the excellent outcomes for young people. The outcomes demonstrate that all staff are consistently concerned with the welfare, education and progress of the young people at the service.

Young people thrive and excel because there are effective and consistent frameworks to support their behaviour, health, education, social and safeguarding needs. Young people develop personal awareness that facilitates a greater understanding of how their experiences impact on their plans and transition through adolescence and into adult life.

The interactive relationship between care and education makes a significant contribution to young people's progress. There is an excellent commitment and drive to help young people address challenges in educational attendance and achievement. All young people attend further education colleges and look forward to gaining qualifications and employment.

Staff are very proud of young people's achievements. Young people grow in confidence and develop positive identities because their achievements and development is consistently reinforced. Young people continue to mature and develop because staff are highly motivated and continuously present young people with opportunities to learn, develop and try new things.

Young people are robustly safeguarded. Their behaviour significantly improves because they understand and respond to the clear boundaries. Behaviour management is successful because staff ensure young people's individual needs are explored and facilitated. Young people become increasingly more responsible in managing their own behaviour. They develop emotional resilience and self-confidence because they are treated with a high level of respect.

Young people live in an environment where their awareness and tolerance of equality and diversity is promoted and challenged. There is an excellent and proactive approach to managing and addressing young people's concerns. Their wishes, feelings and views are heard, included in the running of the service and impact on improvement.

The manager has strong leadership qualities which impact on and motivate an established and dedicated staff team. Organisation, policies and procedures are robustly and effectively managed. There is a clear focus on quality assurance to maintain existing standards and to drive improvement in the running of the service and outcomes for young people. However, the excellent practice in relation to developing young people's independence skills is not fully recorded in the young people's care plans.

There is one recommendation set as a result of 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):

- ensure the home contributes to the development of each child's care plan, including the pathway plan for "eligible" care leavers and works collaboratively with the young person's social worker or personal adviser in implementing the plan. (NMS 12.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make exceptional progress in this service. They thrive, learn and develop due to clear behaviour management, robust safeguarding and a strong focus on education.

Young people, who have experienced significant disruption in their childhood and present complex behaviours, grow in self-confidence. They develop emotional resilience as they develop meaningful relationships and an understanding of their backgrounds. Young people positively engage in education and a variety of activities to develop a strong sense of self-worth and motivation to reach their potential.

Young people embrace the importance of attending college and doing well in education. They have addressed some significant deficits in both educational attendance and achievement. They confidently talk about their learning, plans for further education and employment. Young people are currently embarking on new college opportunities and they look forward to making a valuable contribution to society.

Young people, parents and social workers are extremely positive about the educational outcomes and achievements of young people. Young people are able to develop and reach their potential and greatly value the excellent support they receive from both teaching and care staff in the home.

While some young people express initial difficulty with the very clear and structured routines in the home, they acknowledge that close staff supervision, structured activities and firm expectations significantly impact on the progress they make at the service. Young people value how they have better ways to stay safe, get on better with families and enjoy positive relationships. Young people are significantly safer because they make positive life choices. They make conscious, well-informed decisions to avoid poor relationships and risk-taking activities, which has resulted in a decrease in going missing from care.

Young people are safer and more able to explore and channel their individuality, skills and abilities into achievement and positive opportunities. They grow in confidence and develop resilience because they are given and experience positive gender role models. They have opportunities to express their sexuality and have positive awareness of gender. For example, making positive relationships and improving their perceptions about age and gender.

Young people are secure in their relationships with adults because the expectations in the home are clear, realistic and based around family-group living. They are cared for by a staff team with a good gender balance and a broad age range. Young people benefit from the mature nurturing and parenting skills of the staff.

Young people develop a range of interests and skills; they enjoy cooking, gardening, looking after animals, going to concerts, walking and shopping. Young people develop skills and interests because they are cared for by staff who have, and pass on, excellent knowledge about a range of activities and opportunities. Young people grow in self-esteem and have a greater understanding of the role of adults in their lives. Living with and being supported by such strong adult role models makes a significant impact on young people. They see and experience the skills, attitudes and maturity they will need to manage their own transitions to adulthood.

Positive role modelling and participation empowers young people to confidently manage the challenges of living independently. Proactive approaches, such as the staff managing on the same weekly food budget as the young people, positively impact on young people. They have positive expectations of themselves and others. Staff and young people plan their menus, shopping lists and cook together. Young

people learn independence skills alongside staff.

Young people are also very much a part of running the home; looking at the home's budget and making savings are all part of living at the home. They see the benefits of good budgeting. Young people are proud of the new computer game bought as a result of improved budgeting for activities. They also like all the new pictures and accessories for the lounge. They value these items because they chose them and were able to buy them because of good financial housekeeping.

Young people are able to express themselves and feel valued because they live in an environment that identifies, develops and celebrates difference. They are given excellent opportunities to make sense of their backgrounds and are encouraged to explore different cultures, positive representations of sexuality and religious beliefs are respected and facilitated.

Young people feel good about themselves because they value and reflect the qualities of the individualised approach and responses to their efforts. Young people are rewarded and this process is now connected to their independent living programmes. For example, young people are rewarded with greater trust and unsupervised times as they grow and develop in maturity. They receive money to go out with friends and shopping as part of their behaviour and education programmes.

Young people are encouraged to believe in themselves. They feel valued because they are encouraged to express their views, feelings and wishes. They contribute to the running of the house during weekly house meetings. As the young people become older and more independent, they value the time to talk to their key workers, care staff, teachers and other support workers. These one-to-one discussions develop young people's emotional resilience as they have opportunities to discuss their past experience and look at different ways to think about themselves, others and ways to behave.

Young people enjoy improved health. They are encouraged to understand and take responsibility for their own medical and health needs. Young people physically and emotionally develop because they can explore and discuss a range of health issues. They develop a good understanding of how lifestyle choices can impact on their health. They lead healthier lifestyles including healthy eating, exercise, good sexual health and improving personal hygiene.

Quality of care

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

Young people are looked after by a competent and well-trained staff team. The staff implement a structured and effective framework for care, education and behaviour management. Young people are cared for and thrive in a stable and nurturing environment because staff consistently implement the established framework. The staff team is committed to promoting diversity and equality.

Care and education planning, risk management procedures and behaviour management plans are comprehensive. Plans are practically detailed, giving clarity to how staff are to support young people. Staff are dedicated and consistently support young people's emotional, behavioural and learning processes. The young people's care is contemporary and meaningful because there is excellent assessment and review of plans. Young people are a key part of this process.

Young people are fully supported and enabled to seek ways to meet their potential. The comprehensive knowledge of staff, about the individuality, including social, cultural and economic backgrounds of young people, is reflected in placement care plans. Staff knowledge about each young person's profile is key to responding to the young people's needs and developing their identities and self-esteem.

Staff place great emphasis on developing positive engagement and meaningful and respectful relationships with young people. These relationships are an outstanding feature in the positive outcomes for young people. These positive and nurturing interactions impact on young people's ability to make new friends and experience new social settings.

Strategies to enable the education of young people are an outstanding feature of this service. Improvements in education attendance and achievement are highly valued by the young people, parents and social workers.

Close working relationships between the school and care staff are effective, pragmatic and facilitate young people's placements and their achievements. They work tenaciously to ensure that all young people can make a connection and engage with learning. The commitment of the teaching staff is reflected in the comment, 'We will always look for a way in, we can always find a way in eventually; just takes longer with some young people than others.'

The routines in the house, including bedtimes, getting up, mealtimes and staffing levels are arranged in order to promote education. Staffing levels are also arranged to ensure young people enjoy and pursue a variety of interests and activities. Young people live and learn in an energetic, vibrant and enabling environment and this is summed up by a member of staff's comment, 'Every experience we give young people is a learning opportunity.'

Staff also maintain excellent relationships with local colleges, ensuring young people can access courses of their choice, and colleges are able to support young people's individual personalities. The proactive approach to the learning and development of young people echoes the support they receive to develop independent living skills.

Staff are skilled and enthusiastic in encouraging young people to explore opportunities to develop practical skills, self-confidence and experience more independent living. All young people are encouraged to take responsibility for domestic tasks, including caring for their pets, livestock and the vegetable garden. They are also supported by staff with meal planning, budgeting, cooking, getting to and from college and going out independently.

Staff provide creative, practical and supportive opportunities for young people. There is an increased focus on trust and responsibility to help young people grow in maturity. However, this excellent practice is not meaningfully included in the care planning and review process.

Young people's health is promoted because staff have an excellent awareness of young people's physical, emotional and mental health issues. Health care plans are comprehensive, effectively implemented and closely monitored. Young people's health is promoted and protected with safe and effective procedures for the storage and administration of medication. Young people are strongly encouraged to cook and eat healthily. They are provided with a variety of activities that encourage physical exercise.

Young people confidently use the complaints process and information about how to complain is available. They are further supported with, and empowered to use, independent advocacy and external agencies that they may wish to contact with their concerns and complaints. House meetings and regular key working contact are important processes in including young people's views and wishes in the running of the home and their placement plans.

Young people live in a well-maintained house, providing a homely environment to meet their needs. Staff and young people make clear efforts to make the house comfortable and homely and standards of décor and furnishings throughout the home are good. There are good levels of privacy for young people and they each have their own bathrooms. Young people's bedrooms are personalised and reflect their preferences and their individuality.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people live in a safe, secure and stable environment. There are exceptional improvements in the safeguarding outcomes for all young people living at this home. Safety is paramount and attention to the supervision of young people is detailed and consistent.

Young people, parents and social workers are confident that young people are safe and secure. They identify significant improvements in their behaviour and abilities to make safer choices and positive decisions.

Young people are protected with robust recruitment processes, including checks on agency staff working at the home. Visitors are checked, vetted and monitored. Staff are well trained in child protection, behaviour management and health and safety. Safeguarding is of a high standard because staff regularly update their knowledge, including training in sexual exploitation and extended child protection training. All staff are aware of their own roles, responsibilities and other agencies involved in

keeping young people safe.

Safeguarding outcomes are significantly improved because staff are fully aware of the procedures regarding young people going missing from the home. Young people are consistently reassured as staff will always follow them when they leave the home. Safeguarding strategies are effective with proactive liaison with social workers, families and the police. There is an exceptional reduction in young people going missing from care.

Levels of safety are effective because the robust and regularly reviewed policies and procedures are implemented by experienced and competent staff. Staff are well deployed to ensure that all young people are supervised, kept safe and receive appropriate support. The high levels of supervision both inside and outside the service are appropriate to the significant vulnerability of young people. These arrangements are key to young people's placements and make a significant impact on their safety.

Young people feel safe and secure because they receive dedication and a consistent response from staff. There is a significant reduction in offending and risk-taking behaviours for young people at the home. Safeguarding strategies focus on robust and regularly reviewed risk assessments. Young people are engaged in meaningful discussions about their safety and they are supported with individual safer care protocols in their placement care plan.

While there is close supervision of young people, risk management strategies are gradually being adjusted to reflect the young people's growing maturity and their transition towards more independent living. The young people understand and gradually come to value the importance of promoting their own safety. They identify significant improvements in their behaviour, risk-taking activities and going missing from care.

Young people are protected from bullying and there is a strong emphasis on talking about attitudes and behaviour.

The staff's knowledge about the individual profile of each young person is key to managing and improving behaviour. Young people do well because staff have excellent insight into how previous challenges and experiences have impacted on and influenced presenting needs and behaviours of young people. Staff use detailed behaviour management plans to support young people who invest time and trust in their relationships with staff because they are encouraged to discuss and sign their plans.

Staff are creative in enabling young people to explore and understand the triggers and strategies for improving behaviour. Some young people understand how having time and space enables them to manage challenging times. Behaviours, such as storming out and running away are now replaced with asking to go for a walk, having a chat with staff and reflection. Consequently, sanctions are few and physical intervention is used as a last resort. Young people understand the rules and

boundaries in the home. Records provide a detailed account of staff practice and include young people's views when physical restraint is used in the home..

Young people live in a safe environment. Young people know what to do in the event of a fire and have excellent insight into environmental safety. They understand how the house is safe and secure; health and safety checks are an integral part of the daily running of the home.

Leadership and management

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

There are no statutory requirements or recommendations from the previous interim inspection.

Young people are excellently cared for because the care framework is consistently implemented by competent staff. Young people live in a stable, safe and nurturing environment. The staff have an excellent knowledge of the home's clear and regularly reviewed policies and procedures. The quality of care, young people's safety and staff practice are outstanding because management systems are established and robust.

The manager and staff are proactive in promoting improvement. This drive is demonstrated by the prompt and effective responses to matters arising from monitoring by the independent person who visits the home. For example, risk assessments are improved and there is now a clear and practical monitoring process for all staff to use. Other examples include, new information and recording formats in medication and greater awareness about the sexual exploitation of young people, following staff training. Policies are regularly reviewed, including the home's safeguarding procedures. Improvement continues because trends and patterns in staff practice and outcomes for young people are used to address improvement.

There is strong leadership and staff are supported to provide consistent boundaries and place a strong emphasis on building meaningful relationships between staff and young people. The manager and staff are pragmatic and proactive in their practice. These attitudes are demonstrated by the adjustments in the care framework as young people develop towards their transition to young adulthood.

There is clear emphasis on ensuring the management systems are established and robust. Staffing levels are excellently managed, responding to the risks and needs of the young people and in keeping with the service's Statement of Purpose. Young people excel because they are looked after by a highly motivated staff team. There is a good balance of experienced staff working alongside more recently recruited staff members. Staff receive thorough and supportive induction. They are developed and challenged with regular supervision and receive relevant, regular and updated training.

Staff are committed to celebrating individuality and diversity. This is supported by a

clear response to meeting the needs of young people and facilitating tolerance of others. Young people thrive and staff develop in this positive environment. The manager and staff place a clear emphasis on promoting and maintaining meaningful and respectful relationships with young people, parents, social workers and other agencies.

Internal and external monitoring of the service identifies good practice, shortfalls and further areas for development. The manager has a thorough knowledge of the legal framework and carries out regular management checks. These checks, alongside monthly checks by an independent visitor, ensure a comprehensive audit against the requirements and standards set down for registered children's homes.

There is a clear commitment, energy and ambition to provide and continuously improve the care framework. Young people are looked after, valued and enabled to achieve their full potential by well-trained and motivated staff. This dynamic leadership promotes an energetic and child-centred service.

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.