

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Stella Lovie
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home, run by a company, provides care and accommodation for up to four young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties, or learning disabilities. The home is organised so that it offers both a small family group type of placement for two young people, and two supported, self-contained living units.

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 living in this home benefit from an experienced staff group who demonstrate a commitment to meeting their needs and keeping them safe. As a result, young people are making good progress relative to their individual circumstances and their time living at the home. Young people feel that their lives have improved since they have been at the home. Placing social workers and relatives concur with this view.

Staff work in a non-judgemental way ensuring young people are respected as individuals. They are resilient and show a great deal of perseverance when managing young people's challenging and occasionally confrontational behaviour. Care planning and practice are highly personalised to meet the individual needs of young people. Young people are genuinely at the centre of how the home works.

Staff demonstrate a good understanding of safe working practice. Young people say they feel safe at the home and respected by staff. Group dynamics and behaviour are managed well. This provides young people with a harmonious environment in which to live. There is a reduction in the level of previous risk-taking behaviours.

Monitoring of young people's progress and development is good and the manager has a clear understanding of the strengths of the home and areas for development. However, the following shortfalls are identified: deficiencies in some areas of recording fail to demonstrate the good work that is done; risk assessments require more frequent review; in-depth return interviews have not been completed for young

people who go missing; and staff have not had all the training to meet the needs of the identified client group for the home. There are no breaches of regulations or failures to meet minimum standards that impact significantly on the welfare or safety of young people.

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
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of restraint a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose which includes a description of any injury to the child concerned and any medical treatment administered. (Regulation 17B (3) (g))	20/02/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure that children's safety and welfare is promoted in the home, with particular reference to regular review of children's risk assessments (NMS 4.1)
- ensure that children are helped to understand the dangers and risks of leaving the home without permission, with particular reference to conducting in-depth return interviews in line with practice guidance (NMS 5.8)
- ensure that staff are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of the children and purpose of the setting, with particular reference to provision of training in how to manage sexualised behaviour (NMS 18.1)
- ensure that a clear and comprehensive summary of any allegations made against a particular member of staff, including details of how the allegation was followed up and resolved, a record of any action taken and decisions reached, is kept on the person's confidential file and a copy provided to the person as soon as the investigation is concluded.(NMS 20.7)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people develop positive bonds with experienced, motivated, well-supported

staff who care about them and act as influential role models. This helps them to aspire and improve their life chances. They benefit from the full attention of the manager and staff who are clear about the need to 'invest' in young people so that they develop positive attachments and better manage their challenging behaviours. As one young person said: 'Before I went into care I was a troubled young man with many issues. The manager and his staff was a positive influence and guided me away from all the negative influences and helped me to gain some independence and build up my relationship with my family.'

Young people's outcomes improve because staff persevere with them and continually try to create opportunities for them to reach their potential and believe in themselves. They are enabled to gain appropriate levels of self-control and personal responsibility both in terms of group living and on an individual level. This helps them to function more effectively in a wide range of settings such as college and the local community. As a result, previous anti-social and offending behaviours are reduced. As one parent confirmed: 'This home's approach has made him want to learn and be less confrontational with people. He's given the space here that he needs and it really has helped him. The home has completely turned around his attitude for the good. It's allowed him to re-think his attitude and take control of himself.'

Young people learn from the guidance of staff and the support of others so they are in a better position in the future to take responsibility for their own actions. To this end, their experience in the semi-independent units is a very useful and realistic preparation for future adult life. It helps with learning to share tasks with others, to consider others, and to do practical tasks such as looking after their belongings, buildings and environment. As a result, they learn to live away from home, and to cope with this emotionally. This means they are well-prepared for the next steps in independence.

Young people have access to individual education programmes that enable them to make good progress relative to their age, level of understanding and personal circumstances. As one relative commented: 'They have got him a fabulous tutor and have been flexible about the timing of his lessons to facilitate it as much as possible. His education has really come forward. His tutor is an absolute star. She has broken through his barriers against education.'

Young people enjoy good health because their health needs are effectively identified and services provided to meet them. They are supported to eat healthily and to attend routine and specialist appointments to ensure they remain fit and well. As one parent enthused: 'Staff meet his dietary needs brilliantly and go out of their way to do this.' Staff work hard to encourage young people to stop smoking or putting their health at risk through substance misuse, though with varying degrees of success.

Quality of care

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

Staff are very effective in establishing and maintaining good relationships with young

people based on positive role modelling, mutual respect and consistent care. As a result, young people feel that staff are completely concerned with their welfare and there is genuinely good rapport between them. They speak highly of the staff's support and guidance. As one young person commented: 'My experience at this care home was probably the best experience I've had in any care facility. Staff helped and supported me to change my life around. I genuinely don't think I'd be the same person I am without them. The staff could go from being a care worker to a friend or just an adult figure in your life depending on what seems fit in the situation you're in at the time. No matter what, the staff would be there to help.'

Staff are skilled in use of positive behaviour strategies to support young people in developing better ways of managing conflict and strong feelings. They help young people to understand past experiences and develop some insight into their circumstances. As one parent said: 'The staff are very hands-on and supportive. They encourage him and work around his reluctance to engage. They handle situations well. They always draw a fresh line in the sand and start again after a hiccup. They leave him to cool down and he has needed this approach. I'm really impressed with them.' As a result, young people are able to successfully overcome adversity and positively develop their emotional resilience and confidence.

Staff are clearly aware of young people's assessed needs. Individual placement plans outline comprehensively how these needs will be met and how progress is measured. Staff are persistent in their efforts to promote positive outcomes for even the most challenging young people. They can see the situation from the young person's perspective and experience, and take serious account of their views. Staff provide them with honest and accurate information and involve them in key decision-making. They invite young people to make recommendations about the service and assistance they need. As a result, young people are fully involved in the delivery of their care. This serves to promote their self-esteem and develop responsibility.

Staff are effective in addressing challenges and barriers to educational progress and achievement, even when young people have been previously out of education for a long time. This includes support to attend appropriate college placements, and provision of qualified tutors as required. As one social worker confirmed: 'It's worked very well with this young person. He has attended education with his tutor there and this is real progress for him.' In addition, as a complement to formal learning, staff are creative in finding opportunities for young people to learn and develop new skills. For example, they are encouraged to undertake work experience. As a result, young people make significant progress in their educational achievements from their starting points at the time of placement.

Staff aim to ensure that young people are not isolated in the community they are living in. They encourage them to access the local leisure, education and community facilities. This includes helping young people understand the multi-cultural environment in which the home is located. This serves to promote tolerance and social cohesion.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say they feel safe at the home. They identify individuals who they would speak to if they were unhappy or worried about anything. Staff recognise the potential for peer domination and risks of bullying. As one young person confirmed: 'I really appreciate the support of the staff. They shielded me from the other lads and I respect them for that. They would take me out to get my mind off things. You have all been great.' This demonstrates that young people feel able to live in the home without fear and intimidation. Staff work hard to address any problems before they become complaints. This means minor grumbles are addressed and harmony in the home is generally maintained.

Staff are proactive in recognising the particular vulnerabilities relating to the diverse needs of the young people in their care. Interventions are creative, thoughtful and underpinned by clear risk assessment. That said, those risk assessments are not reviewed regularly. This potentially compromises the efficacy of staff interventions.

Young people come to the home with high levels of risk-taking behaviours. On the whole, these behaviours tend to decrease in response to the positive and proactive behaviour management strategies employed by staff. Some young people continue to put themselves at risk by going missing from the home. These incidents are responded to promptly and have significantly reduced. The home works well with other agencies to ensure the safe return home of individuals, particularly the local police. The manager reviews strategies to minimise such risks. However, young people do not routinely have sufficiently robust return interviews after these events. This means that opportunities to reduce risk for young people more quickly and effectively are missed.

Good behaviour is promoted through support, praise and a token economy. Staff are conscientious and ensure that young people's welfare is promoted at all times. They act responsibly and always convey to young people the importance of making the right choices to keep themselves safe. Where used, sanctions reflect the principles of reparation and restitution. This helps to influence young people's behaviour positively. Staff are clear that physical intervention is very much a last resort and are more comfortable using their positive relationships built up with young people to diffuse difficult situations. This means that restraint is used in a proportionate way and is rare. However such interventions are not always fully recorded as required by the Children's Home regulations. This means that some young people's records do not provide a complete account of these significant events.

Environmental risk assessments and action to address any shortfalls ensure that young people live in a home that is safe and free from hazards. Staff are trained in all aspects of safeguarding young people. As a result, they are alert to their vulnerabilities and risks of harm, and are knowledgeable about how to implement safeguarding children procedures. Investigations into allegations are handled effectively to provide sound protection for young people, and to support the person who is subject of the allegation. Such concerns are thoroughly investigated to a

satisfactory outcome in collaboration with the relevant safeguarding agencies. However, records of these very occasional situations are not fully compliant with national minimum standards. This means that the home cannot easily demonstrate that they took all the required action.

Leadership and management

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

The home is effectively and efficiently managed by a suitably qualified Registered Manager with a wealth of experience. He is ably supported by a deputy manager and a strong staff team. He demonstrates a firm commitment to values involving confidence, trust, autonomy, fairness and openness. This helps staff to practice in a clearly defined, goal-orientated manner. Staff then have a real sense of purpose in their role and this helps to sustain motivation.

This approach is also reflected in the way the manager places the views and well-being of the young people at the heart of how the home is operated. Their recorded comments since the last inspection clearly demonstrate the positive impact and value that living at the home has had on their lives. As one young person reflected: 'It has been a pleasure living here. For the last year I have never lived in a care home like this before. It's the best I've been in in all the years I've been in care. I get on with all the members of staff very well because they are all easy going. I'd like to personally thank you all and I appreciate how much you've helped me in all the time I've lived here. It's been emotional. Thanks.'

Staff receive good support from their manager which enables them to provide a positive, caring environment for young people. He spends enough time in the home to retain close contact and to influence the way they function. Regular formal supervision provides the opportunity for staff to discuss their work and the care and well-being of young people. This serves to promote better outcomes for young people.

The manager ensures that staff have appropriate development opportunities. This enables staff to feel energised and confident in their practice. It also encourages awareness of practice issues beyond the boundary of the home. However, staff have not had training in the management of sexualised behaviour as claimed in their Statement of Purpose. This compromises their ability to deal with this type of challenging behaviour.

A development plan is in place which enables young people to continue to enjoy good standards and quality of care. The manager takes action to tackle any weaknesses identified through the regular quality assurance arrangements and inspection. Requirements and recommendations from the previous inspection have been acted upon. The manager monitors the quality and impact of the service, continually strives to improve them and makes sure that effective partnerships have been forged with all those involved with the young people. Young people are genuinely able to raise concerns and make suggestions for changes and

improvements which are taken seriously.

There is improvement in the home's relationship with the local community and neighbours. Records demonstrate that the manager is respected and valued by the neighbours for tackling previous concerns about anti-social behaviour. This helps young people be aware of their impact on others and to develop the home's standing in the community.

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.