

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Sonya Robinson
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is owned by a voluntary organisation. It provides accommodation for a maximum of three young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties.

The home is an 'open unit' as part of a 'step down' from a secure unit.

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**.

This is a good home where young people are happy. They are currently making good progress both socially and educationally, and behaviour management has greatly improved despite their often challenging and complex behaviours. Young people feel that they are treated fairly and staff are open and honest with them. They say they feel safe living in this home and that staff genuinely care.

Young people enjoy positive and effective relationships with staff, who demonstrate a commitment to improving outcomes for them. Staff provide a consistent approach to their care and because of this young people have gained in confidence as a result.

The Registered Manager has worked in the home for a number of years and is supported by a stable management and staff team. She has a good understanding of the issues in the home and continues to strive to improve standards of care. This enables the Registered Manager and her team to meet the needs of the children and young people placed here.

Young people are treated as individuals and their needs met accordingly. They benefit from individualised placement plans which are clear and detailed. Young people's individuality is promoted and they are encouraged to engage in a good range of activities in the community with staff at the home. Staff help and support young people to find and mix with appropriate peers.

The standard of décor is well maintained and there is a warm and friendly

atmosphere in the home. There are appropriate environmental risk assessments in place that help to safeguard young people and make this a safe place to live. This inspection identifies areas for improvement in maintaining regular fire drills; planned maintenance of the site; young people's meals and staff training.

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
32 (2001)	ensure, by the means of fire drills and practices at regular suitable intervals, that the persons working at the home and, so far as practicable, children accommodated there, are aware of the procedure to be followed in case of a fire. (Regulation 32 (1) (e))	01/10/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure the home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well maintained and decorated, specifically that consideration is given to additional outside lighting and the management of on-going work, on buildings within the grounds (NMS 10.3)
- ensure that children exercise choice in the food that they eat and are able to prepare their own snacks, within the limits that a reasonable parent would set (NMS 2.4)
- ensure that the learning and development programme is evaluated for effectiveness, in particular, staff training regarding the very specific needs of the young people who access this service. (NMS 18.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people are making good progress in the home. They develop emotional resilience through regular discussions in one-to-one sessions with staff and the young people's meetings. As a result, young people's self-esteem, confidence and relationships with staff are really good. Young people speak very positively about

staff and get on well with them. They feel that they are listened to and are safe. Young people are able to understand some of the reasons as to why they are in care. This enables them gradually to make progress in all aspects of their development; for example young people are making positive choices not to get involved in risk taking and vulnerable behaviour. Young people are feeling more positive, able to engage with staff and other professionals constructively and more willing to accept the help that is available. Staff praise and celebrate young people's individual achievements building young people feelings of self-worth and confidence. One placing social worker said, 'They've been great, the levels of support to the young person and me have been great, they have been really good.'

Contact arrangements made with the immediate and extended family are effectively supported and supervised if necessary. Staff actively promote young people's relationships with their families and as a result of this work, in some cases, young people have successfully returned home.

Young people have good access to a range of health professionals to meet their emotional and physical needs. There is a nurse onsite and the organisation's clinical psychologist provides support for young people and guidance for staff in accordance with young people's placement plan. Some young people are being supported to take responsibility for their own health needs, such as regularly attending and participating in health and therapy appointments. Young people understand the benefits of maintaining a healthy lifestyle; they take part in activities that keep them fit and healthy, such as going for long walks with staff and bouncing on the trampoline. Young people understand about health risks. For example, staff will actively encourage and support young people to stop smoking and offer good advice with regards to relationships and staying safe. Young people have choice in the food that they eat and are able to prepare their own snacks. Though at times these can be in the middle of the night if they are unable to sleep, which isn't necessarily conducive in assisting with the process of going back to bed. Where this is the case, young people and staff are receiving support from the organisation's psychologist with regards to young people's mental health. Social care professionals agree that young people living at the home enjoy access to, good health care services.

Young people's engagement in education has greatly improved when they move into this house as part of their transition from the secure unit. Young people who previously have had very poor educational attendance improve in their attendance and make real efforts in their work. Consequently, this has resulted in them achieving well above their target level and some go on to attend college. This means young people have the opportunity to improve their knowledge and skills in preparation for adulthood.

Similarly, young people are also provided with good support and practical advice to help them develop self-care and independence skills. This work is undertaken taking into account their age and ability and includes encouraging young people to attend to their personal hygiene, wash their clothes, clean their room, budget, shop and cook. Young people are also encouraged to make positive choices in their life and have aspirations for their future.

Quality of care

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

Young people live in a stable, calm and supportive environment. They are responding positively to good routines and structure that staff provide. Staff are friendly and clearly interested in the young people and their lives, and want to help them to achieve their potential to the best of their abilities. Young people say that, 'Staff genuinely care about me.' Staff are extremely effective at getting to know young people and in understanding their personal needs. They are skilled at building good relationships with young people through effective communication and positive interaction.

Staff ensure young people receive very good individual support and guidance. They work very well together with parents, social workers, schools and other professionals involved in young people's lives to develop plans to ensure that young people get the right support. Young people's placement plans and risk assessments provide a comprehensive picture of all their personal needs and the support young people require. Staff put young people's plans into practice effectively to ensure that young people's specific needs are met on a day-to-day basis. Care planning and the staff's practice recognise young people as individuals with different needs, backgrounds, interests and views. They ensure that young people receive an individual service designed to meet their personal needs, cultural background and identity. Staff regularly discuss care plans with the young people to ensure young people are clear about what should be happening and the plans consistently meet the individual needs of the young person. Staff talk regularly with placing social workers and parents to ensure that the outcomes agreed in the care plans of each young person are achieved. A social worker said, 'Staff keep me fully informed and they send me a weekly report' and, 'Staff make regular telephone contact with me to keep me up-to-date.'

Young people live in a healthy environment that actively promotes their physical health and emotional well-being. Staff have a good understanding of young people's specific needs and have received relevant training to ensure young people's needs are met on a daily basis. They closely monitor young people to make sure they are healthy and attend routine health checks and ensure immunisations are up to date. Staff ensure young people get suitable medical advice and treatment when they are feeling unwell.

Staff promote young people's education, learning and development. Staff ensure that the daily routine supports young people's participation in education and school attendance. Young people have easy access to books, art materials, board games, toys and other educational resources. Education can be provided onsite if necessary. Also, staff have good links with local education services and work effectively to support and further improve educational outcomes for young people living at the home. For example, young people's educational abilities and needs are clearly identified. This enables the young person to be matched to suitable educational

schemes and courses, where they can make good progress. Staff also work very effectively with schools and colleges to deal with any potential barriers to young people's full participation in education.

Young people have plenty of opportunities to take part in suitable activities that promote their interests and development. They enjoy a wide range of suitable and enjoyable activities, for example they like going to the cinema, days out to the seaside, meals out, bowling and going to theme parks. Staff also encourage young people to try new things and challenges, including climbing, walking and gardening. Young people said that they really enjoyed these things.

Young people live in a suitably designed and comfortable family house within the grounds of the secure unit. It is a set in its own grounds and there are other buildings present. Several are no longer in use. There are plans to address this and consideration is being given to additional lighting on site. The home is close to some shops and community amenities. The house is clean, suitably decorated, well maintained and meets young people's individual needs, personalities and tastes. Young people are protected from any hazards by a comprehensive range of detailed health and safety procedures, risk assessments and checks. However, the fire drills had lapsed, although this was picked up by the monthly monitoring of the home by the responsible individual and has been addressed. Portable electrical appliances and utility testing have all been maintained to ensure the premises are safe.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people's welfare is of paramount importance. They are effectively supported to overcome any difficulties they may face so they have an opportunity to lead happy and fulfilling lives. Young people live in a safe environment where they are protected from harm and have a strong sense of safety and well-being. Young people say they feel safe living in the home.

Young people are protected as staff have a good understanding of the home's safeguarding procedures. Staff are clear on the action to take should they have any concerns regarding a young person's safety or well-being. They give young people's safety the highest priority and are trained in relation to safeguarding. This means young people are provided with good advice on how to keep themselves safe, such as accessing social internet websites. Staffs' detailed knowledge and understanding of each young person enables them to act in their best interests.

Young people who access this service usually have a history of going missing from care. Young people currently placed have not gone missing, which is a real achievement and sharp contrast to previously being placed in this home. There are very clear procedures in place should this occur such as contacting the placing authority and police. Young people's individual missing from care risk assessments are very detailed and they outline potential dangers to young people, where they may go and when to actually report them missing in line with the perceived risks.

Police say that staff are, 'Excellent, always keep me up to date, let me know who's who. Who is in, on their way or out,' 'I really rate them, staff are very on the ball,' 'Can't fault them.'

Young people say that house rules are fair and are respectful of these. Staff implement clear, consistent boundaries, which means that young people know what is expected of them and what is unacceptable. Positive sanctions far outweigh any imposed for inappropriate behaviour. Physical intervention and restraint is also not common place. Young people live in a physically safe environment. They are protected from any hazards by health and safety procedures and risk reduction plans.

The recruitment and selection of people working at the home is thorough to make sure young people are protected. Also, there are suitable systems in place to ensure that visitors to the home are suitably checked and supervised to protect young people.

Leadership and management

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

The home has a very competent and experienced manager who is well respected by staff, young people and social workers. There is also a strong and effective management team in place which, staff report that ,their strength is working well together, communicating and providing consistent messages for young people.

The home meets the aims and objectives of its Statement of Purpose and those accessing the service are clear about these. Young people receive a copy of the children's guide prior to admission to the home; this contains practical information for young people including how to make a complaint, bullying, incentives and consequences. This helps young people form a picture of what life is like in the home before they arrive.

There was one requirement and one recommendation made at the last interim inspection in October 2012. Both of these have been completed and as a result the Statement of Purpose has been reviewed and updated along with the medication system. Both of which are now effective. The manager has a clear and realistic understanding of the strengths of the service and the areas for further development. The home is monitored by a representative of the organisation. This provides young people and staff with an opportunity to discuss any issues they may have about living at the home. In addition, the Registered Manager monitors systems at the home to ensure that the needs of young people are met.

Staff report that they enjoy working in the home and feel supported by the management and the organisation. There is a hand over system in place at the start and end of each shift, so that all staff are aware of any necessary information relevant to young people. Staff meetings take place regularly, so there is a consistent, formal planned opportunity where issues are shared and updates on

young people discussed. Staff also receive formal supervision on a regular basis, along with an annual appraisal and report that they find this valuable. The organisation is committed to providing training opportunities for staff and staff have completed all mandatory training. However, as the needs of the young people placed in this step down unit from the secure accommodation can be extremely complex some staff say that some training particularly around emotional wellbeing and cognitive thought could be more in depth. This was taken on board by the Registered Manager who now intends to review and renew this training programme.

Staff keep detailed records of their work with young people and their progress is clearly monitored. Keyworkers produce weekly summaries on the progress of young people that are forwarded to their social worker, demonstrating a clear picture of the challenges and achievements over that period. Social workers value these and say that along with regular incident reports, they feel fully updated with the issues pertinent to their young people. Young people's records are securely stored and provide a picture of each child's life in the home. Additionally, there are systems in place to notify relevant people if significant events occur within the home.

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.