

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Lucy Ansell
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This is a specialist home dealing with children and young people who have been severely traumatised or psychologically deprived, with disordered patterns of attachment. This home is part of a children's charity and, along with its school, provides a programme of care, therapeutic work and education for up to 10 children and young people, aged between five and 13 years of age.

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**.

Children benefit from living in an outstanding home which has enhanced their quality of life. Children feel safe and are actively encouraged to participate in and enjoy their childhoods. Staff's number one concern is always keeping the children at the centre of all thinking and planning with how to promote the best outcomes for them. All staff are comprehensively trained and supported in using the therapeutic method to deliver treatment and promote the best outcomes for these severely traumatised children. Managers are clear on communicating high expectations to all staff about sustaining the high quality care and encouraging the development of the service.

Outcomes for children and young people

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

The home provides the children with a stable, secure and nurturing environment. Children make exceptional progress here in developing and growing individually and gaining a positive self-view. Professionals involved in the care of the young people feel that the care provided is outstanding. They say 'improving outcomes for the children is the clear priority of the home and their ethos is outstanding'. Children's experiences of the home are highly positive and they recognise they have made significant personal growth. One child said 'I used to be naughty all the time, now it is just some of the time'. Children are encouraged to develop their own style and individuality. Staff promote awareness and understanding of difference and diversity

through group and individual sessions.

All children are in education with the home supporting individualised packages of education. All children have good attendance. Children have made substantive progress from their starting point.

Children benefit from the high priority that is given to promoting positive family contact. Contact arrangements are actively supported so children feel confident and secure. Placing social workers said 'the support that staff offer around contact is second to none, they go beyond what is expected' and 'they work hard to build working relationship with the child's birth family, whilst ensuring appropriate boundaries so any parent is welcome'.

Excellent health plans ensure that the needs of the children are clearly identified with robust guidance for staff to follow to promote healthy lifestyles and support their health needs. Children are provided with guidance and support to start developing emotional resilience and increase their maturity and coping mechanisms. This is demonstrated by staff's ability to understand what the child is going through and helping them to manage and control their behaviours. An independent reviewing officer stated 'Excellent support and therapies are in place to help children understand and make sense of behaviours and how they impact on themselves and others'.

Quality of care

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

Children receive an excellent quality of care. They learn to grow with the attachments made from the constructive consistent relationships with all staff but particularly their key-workers. Several children spoken to at the inspection said the best thing about the home was their key workers and spending time with them on a one to one basis. All staff have high aspirations for all the children and this helps create a sense of belonging within the home.

Children attend community meetings and small groups, for example, girls group or boys group and these are at the heart of practice for the therapeutic work and for change to take place. These help the children focus on specific issues and allow them space to feel their views and wishes are sought and are being listened to. The children are fully involved with all decisions made about the running of their home, great care and attention is given to ensuring children are fully consulted with and support provided is child focused. Children also use these groups to informally discuss concerns and if staff feel concerns need to be taken further they help children to formalise the complaint.

All children attend the home's own school and this was recently judged overall good following its Ofsted education inspection in May 2012. The inspector wrote 'The needs of individual pupils are understood very well and catered for effectively through good teaching. The therapeutic nature of the community within which the

school operates has a strong impact on the personal development of pupils and their readiness to learn'. The amount of progress being made individually by the children, taking into account their starting position, is substantial..

Children are fully aware of their care plans, which are sufficiently detailed to guide staff effectively in the day-to-day support needs. Children benefit from individualised placement plans which are focused on clear measurable outcomes and they are fully involved in the writing and review of these plans. All children are healthy. Children are supported to access medical professionals such as doctors, dentists and opticians as appropriate. Staff are well trained and competent, having received training in key areas such as first aid, food handling, emotional well-being and other issues which affect children. The home provides a healthy environment with fresh, home cooked wholesome meals, plenty of time to play outside in the large grounds and opportunities to experience new activities to keep children physically fit. Children state 'another brilliant thing about our home is playing games outside with all our friends'. The home takes the children on a week's holiday annually and the children were very excited as this was happening soon.

Children have excellent opportunities to experience emotional warmth and competent care, as well as to form appropriate attachments with trusted adults who look after them on a day-to-day basis. One placing social worker commented 'the environment on offer enables the child to express their feelings and emotions in a safe place.' Each child has their own personalised bedroom where they are able to keep private possessions safe. Children benefit from a home which is homely, safe and well maintained.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The home uses a clinical model within a therapeutic environment to create a safe, nurturing atmosphere in which the children feel safe and secure. Staff are continuously monitoring group dynamics within the home, swiftly addressing any issues of conflict. Children state they are able to raise issues which are worrying them immediately ensuring they feel safe and supported. Bullying is not an issue of concern due to the very high supervision. Children look to the staff to swiftly address any peer issues to ensure they remain safe and children have confidence in the staff.

Risk assessments are robust and reviewed regularly. Positive and negative changes in children's behaviour are constantly discussed and plans updated to meet their individual and changing needs. Effective behaviour management plans are in place, which promote de-escalation techniques rather than physical intervention. These are written with the child in both a child friendly format and then more comprehensively for staff. This is in conjunction with integrated systemic therapy and restraint training. Therefore the home has highly qualified individuals with consistent and robust approaches to managing behaviour, so the children learn appropriate boundaries but also how to manage their own behaviours. The therapeutic approach

to behaviour management means that the children feel that staff are 'always thinking about them'.

Comprehensive updated policies and procedures are in place and agreed with appropriate agencies to ensure that if children ever did go missing, they could take the appropriate action. The home maintains the safety and security of the building and grounds, and thereby the safety of the children, staff and visitors through robust maintenance and monitoring systems.

Children are safeguarded from unsuitable people gaining employment in the home through robust vetting practices. Comprehensive systems ensure no member of staff is employed at the home unless all checks have been undertaken to ensure their suitability to work with vulnerable young people.

All staff are competent and appropriately trained in safeguarding procedures. Any issues of a child protection nature are managed appropriately, ensuring the safety of the child remains paramount. Knowledgeable staff work with other agencies to protect and promote the safety of the children in their care.

Leadership and management

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

Children live in a home that is competently and effectively managed in line with its Statement of Purpose by an experienced Registered Manager. Young people judge the service they receive as outstanding. One child said to the inspector, 'You could not live in a better home.' The management team and the staff are passionate about improving outcomes for children and young people. Staff say 'This is not just a job for them. Management really care about the outcomes for the children and are constantly thinking about them and how to improve their lives.'

The stability of the team and the team camaraderie is very high. Staff say they are well supported and supervised alongside receiving excellent training which ensures they can skilfully and effectively facilitating the progress of children. In partnership working with other professionals, staff proactively and consistently help children to overcome any obstacles in their way which stem from either their past or present situations. Children speak highly of all the staff.

The home has clear development plans that are based on comprehensive monitoring systems and realistic self-assessments of the strengths and weaknesses. Children are fully consulted and given excellent opportunities to contribute to the development of the service. Managers and staff keep up to date with the professional developments in the field of residential care of children. The home is able to demonstrate its capacity for continuing improvement by not receiving any requirements or recommendations on this visit but still implementing plenty of new initiatives to improve its service. Placing social workers commended the 'excellent communication, verbal as well as written reports'.

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.