

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Thomas Webber
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is owned by a private organisation. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to a maximum of three young people, who may have emotional and behavioural difficulties.

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**.

Overall the home provides young people with a good and consistent quality of care with some outstanding features. Young people benefit enormously from living at a home where they receive a high level of care and support from a very committed, enthusiastic and dedicated staff team. As a result, young people make significant progress and thrive in a warm, caring, supportive and nurturing environment.

Excellent and supportive relationships exist between staff and young people. The nurturing that young people receive promotes their self-esteem. This enables them to grow in confidence and feel valued and well cared for. Young people feel safe living at the home and are very positive about the quality of care and services provided and their overall experience of living at the home.

Robust safeguarding practices promote the safety and welfare of young people. Staff fully support and promote young people to sustain their educational placements to assist them to realise their ambitions. Effective management ensures that good use is made of a range of monitoring activities relating to the quality of care provided to continually improve outcomes for young people.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- review the home's written policy on managing behaviour with a view to providing a better balance between enabling young people to make choices whilst keeping them safe, with particular reference to Volume 5 Children's Homes section 2.60 to 2.64. (NMS 3.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people benefit enormously from the personalised care and support they receive. This helps them to cultivate a positive view of themselves and develop their self-esteem. Staff demonstrate a very strong commitment in supporting young people to make good progress socially, emotionally and educationally. The home's clear boundaries, expectations, rules and routines also contribute to providing young people with an environment that focuses on positive outcomes. The current practices in place for the protection of young people in relation to being given unsupervised free time is somewhat restrictive. Although young people accept the rules, these do not provide them with an appropriate balance between enabling them to make choices while keeping them safe.

Young people are doing exceptionally well in progressing towards reaching their educational aspirations. Their attendance at school is excellent: in some cases above the national average. The well-established ethos and routines contribute to the achievement of this. Young people attend various educational placements, including further education, which are tailored to meet their individual needs.

The home ensures that families and the respective placing authorities are kept fully and regularly informed of the progress and well-being of young people. Staff recognise the importance of young people being able to maintain constructive contact with significant people in their lives. Staff are very committed to supporting and facilitating young people to maintain the level of agreed contact between them, their families and friends in line with their individual placement plans. Staff will also act as strong advocates to ensure that contact is not compromised.

Young people are supported to acquire a range of practical and financial skills to develop and gain independent life and social skills based on their individual needs and progress. These skills help and equip them to cope with the transition into semi-independent living. Comprehensive pathway plans are well established for this purpose.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit and flourish from living in an environment where warm, caring, nurturing and supportive relationships exist between themselves and staff. Young

people spoke extremely positively about the care and support provided and their overall experience of living at the home. The dedicated staff team undertake their duties in a warm, supportive and professional manner. Young people are extremely relaxed and at ease in the company of staff and within their environment.

The home operates an open culture of consultation with young people. Their views, feelings and wishes are actively sought through a range of forums which contribute to and influence the way the home is run. The use of individual key worker sessions also provide young people with an invaluable opportunity to discuss and reflect on their past and current situations and behaviours. Young people are also provided with opportunities to consider alternative strategies to manage and take responsibility for their feelings and frustrations in a more effective way.

Clear policies and procedures are well established for dealing with complaints. Young people understand how to complain. They feel comfortable and are fully supported to raise any concerns or worries openly. The home has received four complaints since the last inspection. These were appropriately dealt with, however they related to young people who are no longer residing at the home. Records show that complaints are taken seriously and are responded to and addressed without delay. This ensures that good outcomes are achieved for young people.

Young people are extremely well cared for in line with their comprehensive and personalised placement plans together with other relevant documents. The quality of these documents are consistently high and thorough covering all aspects of young people's development. They also provide staff with excellent guidance on how to effectively work with and to meet the day-to-day needs of young people. Young people are fully supported and encouraged to attend and contribute to their statutory reviews which are held at the required intervals.

Young people live in an environment where they are supported to access the various health care professionals. These include specialist input, where appropriate, to meet their emotional and psychological needs. They are also fully supported to access various information, advice and support regarding a range of other health care issues. Appropriate systems are established for the safe storage, receipt, administration and disposal of unwanted medication to ensure the protection of young people.

Young people enjoy and are supported to eat a healthy, varied and nutritious diet. They are fully consulted in the menu planning process. Staff also support young people to gain an appreciation of dishes from other countries. Young people spoke extremely positively about the quality and quantity of meals provided.

Staff fully promote and support the education of young people to ensure that they are given every opportunity to achieve their educational ambitions. The well-established boundaries and routines of the home, together with good staff support, enable young people to maintain excellent school attendance. Staff have assisted young people, where they are motivated, to successfully enrol in further education. Excellent communication is maintained between the home and the educational

placements of young people. This ensures that the personal and academic development of young people are fully supported.

Young people live in an environment where they are provided with every opportunity to engage in a range of purposeful leisure activities both within the home and in the wider community. Young people are also actively encouraged to pursue any particular interests and hobbies they may have. This ensures that young people have the opportunities to develop a positive and successful view of themselves.

The home's design and location is suitable for its stated function. It is maintained to an excellent standard, being clean, tidy and very comfortable. It is also extremely well-furnished and in good decorative order. There are plans to refurbish the kitchen in the near future. Young people, with the support of staff, take a great pride and responsibility in the upkeep of the home. The premises provide young people with very good communal facilities to meet their individual and collective needs. Young people are provided with their own bedrooms, which are personalised to their own tastes. All bedroom doors are fitted with appropriate locks. The premises also provide young people with good bath, shower and toilet facilities and suitable locks are fitted to these doors to promote their privacy and dignity. Young people are fully consulted about any improvements or ideas they may have regarding the home. As a result, this provides them with a positive experience and enables them to take a pride in their living environment.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The boundaries, structure and routines contribute to young people feeling safe in the home. This is further underpinned by the strength of the relationships established between the staff and young people. Staff receive regular training in safeguarding matters which are further supported by clear policies and procedures established within the home. These practices ensure that all safeguarding concerns are handled in a way that fully protects young people.

Robust anti-bullying practices are also well established which ensures that any incidents of bullying are rare. All incidents of bullying are taken very seriously and effective measures are put in place to deal with and protect young people. The high staffing levels and clear strategies in place also ensure the safety of young people and minimise the number of incidents of bullying. Young people and staff do not currently see bullying as a cause for concern especially as the main participant is no longer resident at the home.

Staff take effective steps in respect to all absences where young people go missing. Incidents of young people going missing have decreased over the past year with the change of young people accommodated. Young people feel safe and well cared for. A clear reporting and recording system is well established which ensures that all relevant parties are kept fully informed of any such event. Individual protocols and

information is fully shared with the local police based on the particular needs and risks of young people. These practices contribute to the safe return of young people at the earliest opportunity.

Young people are fully encouraged and supported to develop and maintain appropriate levels of behaviour. Young people make significant progress in taking responsibility and managing their own behaviour with positive results. Clear routines and boundaries, together with the positive relationships with staff and behaviour incentives, help to contribute to this progress. Comprehensive behaviour management strategies are well established and embedded in practice. These provide staff with effective strategies for the management of young people's behaviour. Staff are trained in diffusing potentially difficult situations. This avoids the escalation of situations and ultimately reduces the number of incidences of challenging behaviour exhibited by young people. The use of sanctions and restraints are now minimal with all methods of control being comprehensively recorded and monitored.

Robust staff recruitment practices are well established which contribute to the effective safeguarding of young people. These practices ensure that new staff are suitably vetted and do not commence employment within the home until all the relevant checks are carried out.

Young people live in an environment which is kept physically safe and appropriately secure. Fire and health and safety policies and practice guidelines are well established. These ensure that young people and staff are appropriately safeguarded. Young people and staff regularly practise fire evacuation procedures and the various health and fire safety records are accurate and up-to-date.

Leadership and management

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

Young people enjoy and benefit from living in a home which is extremely well managed. The recommendation made at the previous inspection relating to young people being able to keep and take their own medication safely has been fully addressed. The manager, who is still currently working towards achieving the required management qualification, demonstrates strong and effective leadership. Staff are highly motivated, enthusiastic and clearly understand their roles and the expectations placed upon them. They are strongly committed to providing young people with a high quality service which ensures that they receive consistency and stability of care.

The Statement of Purpose clearly outlines the aims and objectives of the home. It also describes the level of service young people can expect to receive and how they are cared for. This information is readily available to placing authorities and all other interested parties. A young people's guide is also produced and provides young people with relevant information they need to know about the home.

Good staffing levels are maintained throughout the day and night to meet the individual and collective needs of young people. Young people benefit from living in a home where they are cared for by a stable staff team. Staff are fully supported to fulfil their roles and are very appreciative of this. Daily handover and regular staff meetings are held. These forums provide staff with excellent opportunities to discuss and review all aspects relating to young people and the care practices maintained within the home. Staff also receive individual supervision in line with best practice and annual performance reviews. These processes ensure that their work is appropriately monitored and supported as well as to identify areas for personal development.

Young people are looked after by a staff team who are mostly trained. However, those staff who have not yet qualified are currently working towards achieving this. Staff are also provided with excellent opportunities to develop their knowledge, expertise and competence through attending a wide range of training, including both mandatory and more specialist courses. Staff commented very positively about the range of training opportunities available to them.

The organisation ensures that suitable arrangements are in place to monitor the delivery of care and services provided to young people. Any actions identified during these visits are promptly addressed to ensure improved outcomes are achieved for young people. The manager also ensures that comprehensive and evaluative reports are completed as part of the internal quality of the care review monitoring process.

Staff have access to a range of policies and procedures which underpin their practice. Records are maintained to a high quality, kept up-to-date and are stored securely. Young people are actively involved and contribute to their records which help them to understand their past experiences and plan for the future. The home ensures that parents, where agreed, and placing authorities are kept regularly informed of the progress and well-being of the young people.

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.