

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Janet Hunnam
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This privately owned children's home is part of a large, child-care organisation which has 15 registered children's homes; three educational teaching facilities and a fostering service. The home provides care and accommodation for up to three young people with emotional and/or 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 **outstanding**.

Young people thrive and make significant progress in a stable, safe and caring environment. Led by an effective Registered Manager, the cohesive, skilful and experienced staff team deliver consistent high quality care, which promotes the individual needs of young people and results in substantial improvements to their behaviour, education and personal development.

Young people have extremely positive, trusting relationships with staff and consequently they develop confidence and self-esteem. These relationships underpin their safety and security within the home. Young people feel safe and well cared for. Supporting young people's welfare is central to the home's practice; ensuring staff also keep young people safe. Young people receive highly personalised care enabling them to reduce their risk-taking behaviour.

The views of young people clearly influence the day-to-day running of the home. Staff work hard to provide a consistent and committed level of care. Robust monitoring systems are in place which maintain and improve standards of care and place the needs of young people continually at the forefront of practice and service development.

One recommendation is made as a result of this inspection as the home does not have consent from placing authorities to use bedroom door alarms to safeguard 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):

- ensure that measures such as electronic door alarms are only used where agreed with the responsible authority and if appropriate, the parents. (NMS 10.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Young people make excellent progress from their starting points at the time of admission and as a result of outstanding care. Young people who, prior to their placement exhibited extreme risk-taking and offending behaviour, have made significant improvement. Their involvement in incidents of anti-social behaviour and going missing from home have considerably reduced as a result of being in this home.

Young people are valued, respected and have developed trusting relationships. Through the highly individualised support and stability of their placements young people build their confidence and self-esteem.

Young people benefit considerably from having their health needs promoted to a high standard. Detailed health plans, which staff regularly review, identify their specific health requirements and ensure young people are healthy. Young people understand and acknowledge key health risks and are proactive in addressing these risks, such as attending a smoking cessation clinic to obtain support to give up smoking. Consequently, they are taking greater ownership and responsibility for their own health and lifestyle choices.

Young people are making very good progress educationally. After having a turbulent and unsettled educational history, young people now have excellent attendance at school and are working towards taking GCSE exams. They are also keen to achieve and are planning the next stage of their education to further develop their future life chances. They are successfully participating in work experience and gaining valuable experience of the responsibilities attached to the world of work which further contributes to their learning and development.

Young people use their leisure time constructively and enjoy taking part in positive and stimulating activities in the community, such as Army Cadets and football clubs. Participation in these activities develops their social skills and enriches their social experiences. As a result young people are more confident and are able to meet and interact with their peers in the wider community. Within the home, young people make a positive contribution and help with household chores as part of the daily routine.

Young people benefit from this high level of support in improving family relationships, to the extent that contact is increasing in frequency and plans are in place for some young people to return to their families.

Young people benefit from well-prepared plans enabling them to develop their independence skills at a pace they can achieve. Consequently, young people acquire a range of daily living skills to prepare them for changes ahead. Young people are developing cooking skills to the extent that some young people regularly cook the evening meal for the group. Young people visit colleges, learn how to travel independently and make plans for their future. This effective planning for transition from the home allows young people to develop their confidence and successfully make the move.

Quality of care

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

Young people share excellent relationships with staff and thrive in a nurturing and homely environment. The welfare of young people is central to practice at the home. Staff are sensitive and empathetic to young people's needs and foster respect for each other. Young people's placements are stable and long term; enabling young people to develop positive, trusting relationships with the established staff team and accept staff support. These relationships are good-humoured and supportive allowing young people to learn about themselves and develop confidence and self-esteem, knowing they are valued as individuals.

Young people's views are actively sought and highly valued by staff. Formal meetings take place regularly where young people can share ideas and influence the running of the home. In addition to choosing their menu, suggesting activities and proposing improvements to their home, discussion takes place on important issues such as their views on sanctions and whether they fully understand how to make a complaint if they have any concerns. Young people are also involved in the recruitment process for new staff. Candidates work a trial shift and provide the manager with their opinions relating to the suitability of the person to work with them at the home. When feedback from young people is negative, the candidate is not employed to work at the home. This enables young people to feel that their views are respected and valued by managers and that they can influence important decisions affecting their care.

Young people are confident that they can talk to any member of staff if they have any concerns and know staff will take them seriously. Young people have not made any complaints since the last inspection as staff address concerns promptly and informally. As a result of this approach, young people know that their views are important and they contribute to decisions that affect them.

Young people receive personalised care that promotes all aspects of their needs and identity. Care plans are detailed, comprehensive and regularly reviewed so that they

remain current. Staff successfully implement the strategies outlined within these and, because of this, the holistic and the adolescent needs of young people are well met. Young people are fully involved in this process. Frequent key working sessions with young people demonstrate on-going staff input to address issues of concern and involve young people in reviewing the targets set in their reward scheme. This approach allows them to develop an understanding of themselves and the necessity to take responsibility for their actions and behaviour. These one-to-one meetings also enable young people to contribute to their pathway plans to develop their skills in areas such as independent travel as they prepare to make the transition from the placement. Consequently, young people gain confidence in making decisions as they move towards adulthood.

Each young person's identity is valued and any specific needs, whether cultural or religious, are known and met to a high standard. Staff have arranged visits to church and a mosque enabling young people to explore different religions and their cultural heritage.

Young people live in an environment that actively supports their well-being. Staff encourage young people to engage in healthy lifestyles including participating in regular exercise and eating nutritious meals. Consequently, young people understand their health needs and are able to make informed decisions about their own health. Staff keep in mind young people's psychological and emotional health and obtain specialist advice to ensure they are supporting young people with appropriate strategies to further their well-being. A robust system is in place for the administration of medication.

Education is highly valued and promoted in the home. This stable and committed staff team is proactive in supporting young people to attend education and achieve to their full potential. When young people experience difficulties in school, staff ensure that alternative educational strategies are implemented to allow young people to have a positive education experience and have full opportunities to maximise their learning potential. This established culture of promoting education results in young people having excellent attendance at school and in making significant progress in their educational attainment.

Young people live in a home that is comfortable and well maintained. There is a commitment to providing a pleasant living environment that is as homely as possible. Young people personalise their rooms and choose the décor giving them a sense of identity and belonging.

Professionals report that communication with the home is excellent and they are kept well informed in relation to the progress of young people. Parents receive monthly written reports regarding young people's progress, which, they say, are very helpful. A parent reported that they are 'very pleased with the young person's progress at the home, particularly their behaviour' and that the young person has 'improved massively since being at the home.'

Safeguarding children and young people

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

An excellent culture of safety protects young people and ensures they are kept safe. Routines, structure and boundaries enable young people to feel safe at the home with strong relationships between staff and young people underpinning their safety.

Keeping young people safe is at the fore-front of staff practice. Young people's behaviour improves due to close individualised support from staff. Each young person has a 24 hour behaviour management plan in place along with very detailed risk assessments, which identify their specific vulnerabilities and strategies to minimise potential harm. Challenging and risk taking behaviours of young people are robustly considered and incorporated into their plans. Staff are extremely proactive in addressing any risk taking behaviour with young people utilising the meaningful relationships they share to support and encourage them to behave appropriately. Consequently, young people are developing coping skills to manage their own behaviour resulting in less challenging and abusive behaviour, reduced offending and risk-taking behaviour. Staff actively promote and reward positive behaviour. Incentives are in place related to young people's specific targets, to support them in areas where they have difficulties. A social worker commented, 'The strategies to manage behaviour and help the young person develop emotional intelligence and appropriate social skills are well thought through and used consistently by staff.'

Incidents of young people leaving the home without permission are rare. However, clear protocols are in place which ensure staff take appropriate action to protect young people if such incidents occur. Incidents of bullying are infrequent. Staff take prompt, highly effective action to deal with such behaviour and all young people sign an anti-bullying charter demonstrating that the home does not tolerate bullying.

Staff are trained to manage situations that may require physical intervention safely. However, restraint is used as a last resort. Staff are competent and skilled in de-escalation techniques in circumstances where young people may become angry, upset or frustrated. As a result, incidents involving physical intervention are reducing. Staff use sanctions appropriately and young people's views on sanctions within the home are reported in their meetings as 'being fair'.

A comprehensive and robust approach is in place to address all areas of health and safety, ensuring measures protect young people and staff from the risk of harm. All required tests and servicing takes place with appropriate fire safety procedures so that young people benefit from a safe environment.

The home follows robust recruitment processes thus protecting young people from the employment of unsuitable people.

Staff assess young people in relation to any additional security requirements that may be necessary to keep them safe at night. Bedroom door alarms alert staff if young people leave their rooms at night enabling staff to safeguard young people

and protect their welfare. However, formal consent from placing authorities for this measure is not evident in young people's records.

Leadership and management

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

The Registered Manager of the home is highly effective. He provides excellent leadership to a staff team that is experienced, stable and committed to providing high quality care to young people to secure outstanding outcomes.

Staff report that the Registered Manager provides high quality support, advice and guidance, which they greatly value. A member of staff stated, 'The manager is very approachable and he really understands the young people and the staff.' The Registered Manager fosters an open culture within the home in which staff reflect on their practice to benefit young people and ensure they meet young people's needs. Staff are continually looking for ways of supporting young people to improve their outcomes.

Recent examples of improvements made include improving the recording of measures of control, restraint and discipline, developing the garden space and improving pathway plans. A development plan is in place which ensures the home continually improves its provision for the benefit of young people. The needs of young people are central to care practice, planning and development with all decisions focusing on their best interests. Young people benefit from this approach and show significant improvements in their behaviour advancing their future life chances. No requirements or recommendations were made at the last inspection.

Placing authorities are extremely positive about the operation of the home and the progress made by young people. Practice in the home is in line with the Statement of Purpose.

Effective monitoring is in place which maintains the high standards of care delivered. The Registered Manager produces detailed and comprehensive quarterly reports that highlight areas for development to promote positive outcomes for young people. Monthly monitoring visits are regular and the subsequent reports are of high quality and add value to the quality assurance system through identifying any shortfalls in the quality of care which the manager is prompt in rectifying. These effective processes sustain the provision of high quality care, demonstrate a capacity to improve and support positive outcomes for young people.

The enthusiastic and motivated staff team have a wide range of skills and experiences. The individual strengths of each staff member are used to support young people effectively and there is a strong commitment to work together and support each other to provide high levels of consistent care. The organisation has a strong commitment to training and development. Staff have the required qualifications and mandatory training to care for young people. Agency staff are not employed so young people are not cared for adults they do not know; therefore the

consistency and continuity of care is not compromised.

Record-keeping is a strength of the home. Records are detailed, well organised and provide an excellent account of young people's past, current and future needs. Significant events are notified to the appropriate authorities promptly.

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.