

Inspection report for children's home

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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 aged between 11 and 17 years. It is situated in a residential area close to a seaside town. There is a shopping parade close by and there is easy access to other local amenities. There are good rail and bus links with towns, schools and colleges.

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**.

The home provides young people with a good level of care. Young people feel safe and happy and enjoy positive relationships with staff. The home works well with partnership agencies and the police in protecting young people and in promoting their welfare. Placing social workers value highly the level of care provided by the home. Young people's educational needs are well supported through the agency's own school provision and their on-going vocational aspirations are well supported by staff.

The staff team are well managed and there are good levels of training and on-going supervision. As a result of this inspection there is one recommendation raised in relation to the practice of admitting young people to the home in an emergency.

Young people are included in the day-to-day running of the home and there are opportunities in place for their views to be heard. Behaviour management is properly focussed and is delivered in the best interests of the young people. Managers and staff ensure that diversity is celebrated and valued. Regard is given to a young person's particular needs arising from their heritage, culture or racial background. Staff have a sound understanding of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding and in reducing risk and they receive good training in areas of this work.

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 the registered person does not admit children in an emergency unless explicitly included as a function of the home. (NMS 11.7)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people's individual needs being are assessed and are clearly written in placement plans which take into account all aspects of their social and personal requirements. Social workers from placing authorities are happy with the progress young people have made during their time at the home and feel that the home's practice is in line with agreed care plans. One social worker commented that: 'The home have achieved great things to support this vulnerable and sometimes difficult young person.' Another social worker commented, 'this young person often absconded in previous placements and now they don't abscond at all, they have also re-established their school attendance. The young person enjoys living in the home and gets on well with the staff. The staff group is quite stable and there are few personnel changes. This gives consistency.' On-going care based on clearly written placement plans helps to provide positive outcomes for young people.

Young people are encouraged to take appropriate responsibility for their own health needs and how to make informed decisions about their lifestyle choices. Two of the three young people currently placed are smokers. While actively discouraging young people from smoking, the home allows one of them who is aged over 16 to smoke in the garden of the premises. Staff at the home provide the young person with smoking cessation information packs which the home has obtained from the health authority. The home continues to plan ways of discouraging the young person from smoking and this is contained in the care plan. Staff are actively involved in engaging young people in a range of health related issues regarding the development of their emotional and psychological well-being. The organisation have good links to the local child and adolescent mental health services team and the organisation employ the services of a clinical psychologist and music and art therapists who undertake direct work with the young people working around their assessed needs.

The home encourages young people to engage in healthy activities. There are a number of bicycles which young people enjoy using and there is a rule that safety helmets must be used. Young people are supported by staff in attending a local swimming pool, attending a local gym and in enjoying walking in the town. This increases young people's fitness levels and their sense of enjoyment. Two of the young people are actively involved in menu planning for themselves and in making sensible food choices as part of their preparation programmes for living independently. Young people have been successful in weight reduction with the

support and direction of care staff. This on-going attention to young people's emotional and physical health, participating in healthy activities and eating sensibly promotes their healthy lifestyles and increases the fitness of young people.

Young people are supported in achieving their educational potential by attending either the agency's educational facility or by undertaking vocational courses at local colleges. There is good communication between care and teaching staff during the daily exchange of information between teaching and care staff. This ensures that care staff can support young people with their educational progress. This has been particularly evident in the positive way that one young person has made progress with their reading. One young person who has not attended formal education for long periods before coming to the home is making good progress in attending school and has achieved significant educational progress. Clearly written pathway plans have been put in place for progressing young people's training and development. Young people receive good support in developing life skills to assist them towards independence and moving on. A full programme of activities are in place to support this. These activities include programmes of financial management and learning the practical skills of everyday living. Young people receive age related pocket monies and are given a clothing allowance. They are encouraged to open savings accounts and to make practical decisions about budgeting for clothing and food preparation. This provides young people with a positive educational experience, prepares them for living independently and gives them good later life chances.

Contact between young people and their families is fully supported by staff who give practical support in facilitating contact arrangements. Individual arrangements are in place for each young person's use of mobile phones which are appropriately risk assessed. Staff keep families well informed about their children's progress and are always invited to attend review meetings that are held in the home. Maintaining family links gives young people a clear sense of their personal identity and provides them with a good awareness of their historical background.

Quality of care

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

The home celebrates young people's academic and personal achievements and has a range of measures in place that are aimed at acknowledging these achievements and promoting young people's self-worth. These include financial incentives for achievements and trips out. Young people have choices about how these achievement awards can be used. One young person has been selected to be a member of a 'Young Person's Forum' which is a consultative body of the organisation. These measures not only empower young people but help them build on self-esteem and self-worth. Management and staff are consistent when engaging with young people or advocating on their behalf. An example of this is the way that young people are accompanied to make enquiries about college courses that they are interested in. This contributes towards an environment which enhances reassurance for young people and reinforces the key principles of building on trusting relationships. Relationships formed between staff and young people are strong.

Young people stated that they enjoy living in the home and that they get on well with staff.

There is a clear behaviour management system in place which all staff and young people are familiar with and where young people are rewarded for maintaining good behaviour. All staff are trained in the application of physical restraint although they will always try avoidance and distraction techniques in the first instance. Any event where physical restraint is used is appropriately recorded and systems of support for staff and young people are put in place. The boundaries instilled by staff are professional, balanced and fair and only agreed sanctions are applied and these applications are appropriately recorded. Young people are also supported in forming trusting and safe relationships with other adults within the organisation and the wider community. Young people learn to negotiate and develop confidence in expressing their views on aspects of how the home is organised and run. There are weekly house meetings and monthly 'Have Your Say' meetings about the organisation as a whole. Young people are able to make their views known about their care at these meetings, at key worker sessions and at their looked after children reviews. They feel that their views are valued and listened to. This means that they are able to affect change on matters that are important to them. They also appreciate why at times it may not be possible to act upon their wishes.

Young people are provided with appropriate information on how to report any concerns. There is a recording system in place for logging any complaints raised by young people and a separate system for other stakeholders who may wish to raise a complaint about any aspects of the home. No complaints have been raised by young people, parents or other stakeholders since the time of the previous inspection. Young people comment that they are able to talk with staff openly about anything that might be troubling them. All of these measures ensure that young people have a voice in the quality of their care and in the running of the home.

The home tries to ensure that young people become involved in community events and one young person is actively engaged in charitable work by doing a sponsored walk. This helps young people to have a sense of responsibility for the community in which they live. The home has a good working relationship with the local police and clear guidance arrangements are in place for staff on the action to be taken in the event of a young person going missing.

The agency uses a range of therapeutic services to support young people. These include clinical psychological assessment and various therapeutic inputs. These include art and music therapy. Comprehensive individual placement and 24 hour management plans provide detailed information on how young people are to be cared for. Key workers and all staff are fully conversant with the delivery of the plans and in ensuring that agreed interventions and needs are met. Young people are actively involved in their care planning. This promotes confidence in having a say in their own life. Young people state that they feel safe in speaking out at care plan review meetings and in other forums where their care is discussed. Placing authorities comment positively on the high standard of the home's placement plans which fully detail the agreed therapeutic interventions to be applied. These plans are

effectively reviewed thereby ensuring that young people's on-going and changing needs are fully addressed.

Young people's physical, emotional well-being and welfare are well promoted. Young people are all registered with a local General Practitioner and attend routine dental and sight check-ups. They also have access to a range of specialist services providing medical, psychiatric and psychological support. Staff are trained in first aid and have a good knowledge of the home's procedures for the administration of medication in which they have also been trained. These measures ensure that children's general health and medication provision is effectively monitored.

There is a key worker system in place whereby an identified member of staff is responsible for having a clear understanding of a young person's personal and family information. They have a knowledge of their overall care needs and how these are to be met. Staff actively promote education as part of preparation for adulthood and provide young people with practical and emotional support. They have a good understanding of young people's on-going educational and vocational training plans and they provide consistent and meaningful guidance. Young people are supported in pursuing their own interests and hobbies. They are also introduced to, and are offered a wide range of new experiences which helps them to develop new skills and increase their self-confidence. These have included such pursuits as the Duke of Edinburgh award, participating in rugby clubs and becoming involved in a popular activity known as 'geo-cacheing'. This ensures that they are encouraged to engage in elements of their lifestyle which are new, and are of particular enjoyment to them.

Management and staff ensure that diversity is celebrated and valued, while being resourceful in challenging any form of discrimination. High regard is given to young people's particular needs arising from their personal circumstances and individual difficulties. Staff work to meet these needs positively, with care, consideration and sensitivity.

Where possible, young people are encouraged to visit the home before their arrival to meet with staff and the other residents. This is also an opportunity to make early choices about the décor and furnishing of their rooms and other elements of their proposed care. However, young people have been placed in an emergency without visiting the home and this contingency has not been adequately described in the home's Statement of Purpose. Young people's bedrooms are well decorated and furnished and they are able to display their personal effects. This ensures that young people have a feeling of ownership about the home. This is further encouraged by weekly house meetings where young people can express any concerns and make choices about food, planning activities or choices about their day-to-day living. This ensures that young people are consulted about aspects of their day-to-day living and that they enjoy an excellent standard of living environment. The living environment is homely and provides a high standard of accommodation both internally and externally. Maintenance arrangements promptly address damage and breakages to maintain a safe environment.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

There are clear systems and policies in place which help to keep young people safe. Young people said that they feel safe and are safe. Staff receive good training on safeguarding policies and procedures and this training is appropriately updated. Staff have access to clear information about child protection and safeguarding requirements and they demonstrate a sound understanding of the action to take should they have any concerns about a young person's safety or well-being. The agency has a close working relationship with the local children's safeguarding officer and this ensures that knowledge and understanding of child protection is continually being developed.

There is a close working relationship with the local police and this had led to a clear policy, procedure and recording method to be followed should a young person be missing. This is known by all staff. Staff are very aware of each young person's vulnerabilities and are very clear what action to take should such a young person go missing. There is a clear written policy on how bullying is to be addressed and a system for recording any such incident and the action taken in response to an incident. There have been no recorded incidents of bullying since the time of the last inspection. Young people report that they haven't been bullied while in the home and that they are confident that bullying would be effectively dealt with by the staff.

Young people's privacy in their bedrooms is respected while there are structures in place to allow staff emergency access to bedrooms and bathrooms should the need arise. Staff ensure that they do not enter young people's rooms without knocking. Young people's care records are maintained securely and contents are not discussed inappropriately. A good balance is achieved between respecting young people's wish for privacy, ensuring their safety and encouraging their appropriate participation in activities so as to promote social contact with their peers and staff.

Effective behaviour management systems are in place which are properly monitored by senior management. As previously stated, staff are trained in a recognised method of physical intervention but the emphasis is on prevention and distraction to minimise incidents. Any such incidents are properly recorded including the actions taken in response. Young people and staff are properly supported following any such event. Detailed risk assessments are in place which direct and guide staff in supporting young people both within and outside of the home. For example, when young people travel to external events or activities. These are not restrictive and are planned to meet young people's individualised needs while at the same time keeping them safe.

Internally and externally the physical environment is safe, appropriately secure without being restrictive, and is well maintained. There are visits from suitably trained members of the organisation which ensure that the home meets health and safety requirements. There are robust fire safety arrangements which include, staff and young people being familiar with the actions they should take in the case of a fire. Young people benefit from a stable staff team with few personnel changes. Staff

working with young people in the home are carefully selected and vetted and young people are included in the selection process as far as possible. No visitor to the home is allowed unsupervised access to the young people. All of these measures help to ensure young people's safety and well-being.

Leadership and management

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

The home is well managed both directly and by senior members of the organisation. Young people receive a good level of care and support from a well organised staff team. There are good systems of communication both within the management team and the staff group. Staff, social workers and families are well informed about daily events, routines and the progress of each young person. Placing agencies say that there is an excellent level of information and communication provided by the home.

Staff receive fortnightly one to one supervision and there are weekly team meetings. Staff are confident in the management support that they receive. There is a comprehensive staff induction programme and on-going training for staff in the core skills necessary for their role. The organisation has its own staff training section and staff training is also undertaken with the partnership agencies that the home is involved with. The staff team are well balanced with staff of both genders. The deployment and numbers of staff on duty at any one time is based upon the needs of the young people. The management team ensures that staffing levels take into account extra responsibilities, for example, when staff are representing young people at their looked after children reviews and attending school meetings additional staff are deployed. Staff receive training in all of the key areas applicable to their work with young people. Young people say that there is always enough staff on duty and that staff are helpful and available to deal with any concerns that they may have during day or night. Staff are supported in obtaining professionally recognised qualifications. All management and staff undertake an annual development programme which identifies their training and development needs. Staff demonstrate a wealth of knowledge about young people's needs. The skills, experience and backgrounds among the staff team are diverse and wide ranging. Models of therapeutic support are available to young people.

The monitoring of care is undertaken via visits and reports required under Regulations 33 and 34 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001. Management are consistent in challenging and evaluating the operation of the service. Outcomes for young people are central to management review which has led to changes in care practice.

The Statement of Purpose is appropriately reviewed, although one aspect regarding admission to the home in an emergency is not included. The aims and objectives of the service are clearly specified. The children's guide contains a wealth of information to help young people settle in during the early stages of their admission. Effective systems are in place for reviewing and updating statutory guidance and records. The home's clear philosophy, shared values and strong management

combine to ensure that each young person is valued and nurtured. The detailed planning of each young person's care, combined with the effective use, when appropriate, of internal and external professional support ensures that each young person, not only has their identified needs met, but are encouraged to achieve their full potential. Placing authority express a good level of satisfaction regarding the leadership and management of the home and with the high level of care provided by the home for the young people placed.

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.