

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Pete Hylton
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is registered to accommodate up to four young people of either gender. The service is owned by a private company. The purpose of the home is to offer young people a service which provides semi-independent living in a supported environment.

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 enjoy living at the home and make excellent progress in all areas of their lives. They develop new skills and further their readiness for adulthood. Relationships between staff and young people are excellent. Young people have extremely positive views about the home, the staff and the quality of their care.

Care plans are highly individualised and ensure that the needs, wishes and preferences of young people are accurately recorded. However, where young people have pathway plans, these are not always similarly updated. This shortfall has not impacted on the outcomes for young people.

Young people are safe and feel safe at the home. Excellent behaviour management ensures that the staff team provide appropriate, consistent and fair boundaries to young people. As a result, this is a home where serious incidents are rare and young people do not go missing.

The management of the home is a key strength. An effective, dedicated and passionate Registered Manager ensures that the home is robustly monitored. She is supported by a similarly committed deputy manager who shares the desire for continuous improvement. Staff are well-supported, clear in their duties and motivated in what they do. The Registered Manager commented that 'we go above and beyond to help young people develop their independence.'

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 home contributes to the development of each child's care plan, including the pathway plan for "eligible" care leavers and works collaboratively with the young person's social worker or personal adviser in implementing the plan. (NMS 12.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Young people make exceptional progress to develop their emotional resilience. They develop a sense of belonging and feel part of the home. A young person commented 'the house is really awesome. I don't want to leave.' Young people are supported to develop and maintain relationships with their peers both in and outside of the home. Where appropriate to do so, young people also maintain their relationships with their families. As a result, they maintain their individual identities and emotional security.

Excellent relationships between young people and staff further enhance the outcomes for young people. Young people develop trust, tolerance and empathy for others. They are encouraged to share their experiences and become an active part of the social group. As a result, they develop skills in living with others and resolving tensions. A young person commented that the home 'just feels like a normal home.'

Young people develop their educational and vocational awareness as a result of living at the home. Where young people are of compulsory school age, they regularly attend and make excellent progress. Where young people have left school, they are engaged in purposeful and appropriate activities. In some instances, this has led to substantial improvements in young people's self-esteem. A young person commented that 'the home has made a massive difference to me.'

Young people are encouraged to develop their readiness for adulthood and independent living. Comments from young people include; 'I am a lot more independent', 'I can now look after myself', 'I am developing my independence loads' and 'I feel respected with my independence, I do my own shopping, I can look after myself now.'

Young people make significant reductions to their harm-taking behaviours. Young people are treated as individuals and with high levels of respect and understanding. This supports young people in developing positive views of themselves. Young people recognise the progress that they make and value their developing maturity. A young person commented that they have 'made improvements with my behaviour.'

All young people are registered with appropriate health care services and make

excellent progress in managing their health needs. Young people enjoy an active lifestyle and enjoy exploring the local town and facilities. They feel at home in the area and are active members of the local community. Young people are encouraged to develop and maintain their interests. For example, they enjoy fishing trips, spending time with their peers and accessing the local gym facilities. This ensures that young people develop a range of hobbies and interests. Bicycles, with the necessary safety equipment, are provided to young people and they are encouraged to access the local and wider community. This ensures that young people are secure in the home's area and also further develop their fitness. Furthermore, young people are developing their awareness of sustainable methods of transport.

Quality of care

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

Young people are involved in reviewing and writing their care plans. As a result, their views are fully incorporated and at the centre of their care. All care plans are fully updated and regularly reviewed. However, where young people have a pathway plan, this is not always similarly updated. As a result, there is the potential for confusion between the two documents. To date, there is no demonstrable impact on the outcomes for young people as a result of this shortfall.

Medication is securely stored and carefully administered. Staff are well-trained and diligent in ensuring that the health needs of young people are promoted at all times. All young people are up-to-date with their health appointments and any concerns over young people's health are robustly addressed. Smoking is actively discouraged and the benefits of healthy lifestyles actively promoted by the staff team. Young people are encouraged to access the local community through public transport, walking and cycling. This in turn promotes their personal fitness and further enhances their outcomes.

Relationships between young people and staff are excellent. A young person commented that, 'all the staff really help you, they sort things out for you.' A culture of mutual respect is evident in the home. Young people feel respected by the staff team and listened to. Furthermore, young people recognise that the staff team are committed to helping them and are flexible in their approach. A young person commented that, 'the staff are very flexible. You get the impression that they do more than they have to. It's nice to know that staff will do that for you. They care.'

All young people are engaged in appropriate educational or vocational placements. As a result, young people are working towards age-appropriate qualifications that will equip them for their future lives. The staff team are supportive of young people's career aspirations and ambitions and work well with external services of support. A careers worker commented that 'the staff team work hard to support young people into education, training and employment' and that 'young people are encouraged to achieve their potential.' Where concerns arise over educational placements, the staff team are tenacious in overcoming barriers and resolving any difficulties. A social worker commented that the staff team 'promote the benefits of education.'

Regular key working sessions focus on helping young people to make progress. These sessions are planned with the young people and based on their individual needs, goals and areas for development. As a result, young people are fully supported in making progress and with identifying how to overcome any difficulties. Where young people have concerns, they are fully encouraged to complain. A clear complaints policy is in place and young people know that they are listened to. This is further enhanced through young people having access to a freely-available telephone. Furthermore, a range of support services are promoted in the comprehensive young person's guide. This ensures that all young people know how to contact services of support should they so wish.

Young people develop their tolerance and understanding of peers through regular house meetings. A range of topics are discussed and young people are fully encouraged to have their say. As a result, they feel involved in the running of the home and know that they have influence over decisions made. This is further enhanced by young people taking turns to chair these meetings. As a result, they develop an enhanced understanding of cooperation and mutual respect.

Food provided to young people is varied, healthy and nutritious. Young people are encouraged to develop and maintain a balanced diet that reflects their choices and preferences. Individual needs and cultural requirements are met at all times. This ensures that young people are able to maintain their faith and preferences while they are at the home. The staff team promote equality in the home by ensuring all young people are treated fairly, with respect and dignity. A member of staff commented that 'it is about knowing the individual, knowing their likes and dislikes. Making sure that the young person knows that we care, that we respect them and know who they are.'

The home is exceptionally well-presented and provides young people with a comfortable and homely environment. Young people are actively involved in choosing décor and fixtures for the home. Young people's art work is proudly displayed around the home and they are fully encouraged to express their individuality and personalise communal areas of the home. A young person commented that 'it doesn't feel like a care home, it's like a proper home. It just feels normal. It's so homely, the house has really improved.'

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are safe and feel safe at the home. They benefit from a nurturing, protective atmosphere where they can develop their sense of security and well-being. The staff team are vigilant to the individual vulnerabilities of young people while encouraging them to develop their independence in line with their ages, abilities and readiness.

The staff team manage young people's behaviour consistently. Clear expectations and boundaries ensure that young people develop socially acceptable behaviours in and outside of the home. A young person commented that 'the rules are really fair, it is easy to relax here.' A social worker commented that the staff team 'manage young people's behaviour really well.' As a result, young people do not engage in risk-taking or harmful behaviours. Since the last inspection, there have been no occasions of young people going missing from the home. Young people express happiness and a sense of security; a young person commented 'I feel safe here. It's a feeling that you get. Staff really care for you.'

Effective behaviour management is underpinned by robust individual risk assessment. All young people are involved in identifying their vulnerabilities and discussing these with the staff team. This ensures that any risks that young people face are shared and addressed. A social worker commented that 'the staff know the young people really well.'

Young people develop an excellent awareness of their personal safety and make significant progress in reducing their harm-taking behaviours. In some cases, there has been exceptional progress in young people developing their personal safety. For example, young people with previously high levels of missing from home no longer exhibit this risk-taking behaviour. A young person commented that 'the home has made a lot of difference to me.' The staff team are clear about the actions they would take should a young person go missing from the home.

Restraint is rarely used in the home and only for the purposes of keeping young people safe from harm. Where restraint is used, it is appropriately recorded and the views of young people sought. This ensures that young people are able to voice any concerns or worries. Effective management oversight ensures that any concerns with regards to the management of challenging behaviour are immediately resolved. Where concerns arise over the practice of staff, the Registered Manager ensures that swift and appropriate action is taken. Effective procedures are in place for staff to raise concerns about the safety of young people. This is underpinned by robust protocols with the local police and safeguarding services. A local authority designated officer commented that they have... 'no concerns. The home keeps us updated when they need to. They are good at working with us.'

Sanctions, where used, are proportionate and fair. Young people are encouraged to record their views in the home's records. This ensures that the Registered Manager is able to monitor the use of sanctions and the impact that these have on young people. The staff team ensure that positive reinforcement is used and young people receive rewards, appropriate to their age and ability. This ensures that young people learn to recognise and value the importance of displaying socially acceptable behaviours.

Robust procedures are in place to ensure that all staff are safely recruited. All required checks are made of adults wishing to work in the home. As a result, young people are protected from potential harm. The home environment is safely maintained. All required checks on electrical and gas installations are in place.

Discreet electronic alarms are used on bedroom doors. These alarms are used to further protect young people. Furthermore, the use of these measures is clearly governed in a specific policy and in the home's Statement of Purpose. Regular health and safety monitoring ensures that any avoidable hazards are removed. Regular fire drills, including evening time drills, ensure that all young people and staff know how to safely evacuate in the event of fire.

Leadership and management

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

The home was last inspected in January 2013 and was judged to be making satisfactory progress. The Registered Manager has ensured that appropriate actions have been taken to secure improvement. The four recommendations have been fully addressed. Extensive redecoration and new carpets mean that young people benefit from a well-maintained and homely environment. Young people are now able to access the internet and therefore enhance their personal studies and interests. All staff are appropriately appraised and their training needs rigorously addressed.

The Registered Manager is highly skilled in leading a committed, motivated and enthusiastic staff team. Communication amongst the staff team is a strength of the home; all staff are clear in their duties and provide a consistent level of care to young people. The Registered Manager stimulates the enthusiasm of staff through regular team meetings, giving staff responsibility for key tasks in the home and valuing their input into making improvements. As a result, staff feel valued, well supported and dedicated to further improving the standard of care at the home.

The management of the home is excellent. Robust monitoring systems are used to ensure that the home meets regulations and that any areas for improvement are identified and acted upon. This is further enhanced through support from senior managers in the organisation who share the Registered Manager's passion for sustaining improvement. Regular monitoring visits ensure that the home is robustly monitored. This is further enhanced by the Registered Manager's own monitoring reports. All areas of the home are regularly and robustly scrutinised. Furthermore, the views of young people are central to the home's development.

The home's Statement of Purpose is up to date and contains all required information. As a result, young people, parents, carers and placing authorities are clear about the home's aims and objectives. The home's development plan clearly sets out the plans for the year. Staff are clear in the home's strategy and how targets will be achieved. The development plan is further enhanced through incorporating the views, wishes and requests of young people. This ensures that young people are at the centre of the home's development.

The Registered Manager ensures that the progress of young people is accurately and diligently recorded. This information is used to plan the delivery of care and ensure that all young people's needs are promoted and met. Furthermore, excellent relationships with placing authorities ensure that this information is appropriately

shared. Comments from social workers include; 'the reports are really helpful' and 'communication is excellent.'

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.