

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Chris Scully
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This is a children's home for six young people of either gender. The home cares for young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties and drug or alcohol dependence, who come from many parts of England and Wales. The home is one of several owned by a private company.

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 **adequate**.

Young people say they feel safe living here. This home provides a safe, supportive environment. Appropriate mechanisms are in place to keep young people safe. Staff usually respond quickly to any issues which may impact upon young people's safety and well-being. Young people's views are respected as they are involved in discussion and the decision making about their care and support, including how they spend their spare time and their future plans.

Young people are recognised as individuals with different needs, abilities, backgrounds, interests and views. Consequently, they receive an individual service designed to meet their personal needs. Staff have a good understanding of the young people they are working with, ensuring their needs are met. This is enhanced by a strong commitment by staff to principles of equality and diversity.

Young people enjoy warm, caring and positive relationships with staff. This enables them to talk about any concerns or issues they may have and receive the right support and guidance. Social workers are complimentary about the support young people receive. Consequently, they have obtained good outcomes and are making good progress in relation to their starting points across all areas of their development.

Management arrangements are usually robust. However, recent events have identified some shortfalls with regards to managing some incidents and training for some staff who have specific roles. Records and documentation are generally well

maintained although there are recording issues within some, such as missing from care risk assessments and health care plans lack sufficient detail. Monitoring of the home is sound and helps managers identify specific issues within the home.

Areas for improvement

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
5 (2001)	ensure HMCI is notified of any revision to the Statement of Purpose within 28 days (Regulation 5 (b))	08/11/2013
16 (2001)	ensure the registered person prepares and implements a written policy which is intended to safeguard children accommodated in the children's home from abuse or neglect, in particular the policy is effectively implemented (Regulation 16 (1) (a))	08/11/2013
11 (2001)	ensure the home is conducted so as to promote and make proper provision for the welfare of children accommodated there, in particular the home's risk assessments, including young people's individual risk assessments, are updated in light of any significant incidents. (Regulation 11 (1) (a))	08/11/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure the home is well maintained and decorated with particular regard to unoccupied bedrooms, the flooring in bathrooms and maintenance of shower cubicles (NMS 10.3)
- ensure there is a systems in place to monitor the quality and adequacy of record keeping, in particular health care plans, risk assessments and records of concerns (NMS 22.1)
- ensure where any sanction are used young people are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records kept by the home in particular should they decline to make comment (NMS 3.18)
- ensure staff are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of the young people, in particular they have access to training on supervising contact and safeguarding training at an appropriate level for their role (NMS 18.1)
- ensure allegations against people that work in the home are reported by the

designated person to the LADO. This includes allegations that on the face of it may appear relatively insignificant or that have been reported directly to the police or Children and Family Services (NMS 20.6)

- ensure the care and support provided to young people minimises the risk that they will go missing and reduces the risk of harm should the child go missing, in particular that missing from care risk assessments are sufficiently detailed. (NMS 5.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people make good progress towards improving their opportunities and the quality of their lives. Young people are confident in their own abilities, improving their self-esteem. They are more settled and emotionally secure. Social workers say that residing in the home has had a positive influence on the young people, how they see themselves and that this has given them more self-confidence. Young people are proud of their achievements and say, staff have, 'Impacted upon me like a meteorite, they told me to get my head down, this was my chance to do well and I have.'

Young people develop an understanding of healthy lifestyles, such as the importance of eating healthily. Young people enjoy a wide and varied diet of home cooked meals. They are actively encouraged to try new foods which it is hoped will expand their dietary experience, for example, trying spicier foods. Meals times are very much a relaxed social occasion, whereby young people and staff sit together and talk about the day's events. Young people enjoy the opportunities to help prepare meals. They talk confidently about their own cooking skills and the range of meals they can prepare on their own.

Young people make informed choices about their health as a result of the excellent guidance they receive from staff. Despite the advice they receive on the dangers of smoking, using recreational drugs and other health care issues, some choose to continue with some of these activities. However, they are engaging with other agencies, such as smoking, drug and alcohol cessation groups. Young people are aware of other health services in the community that they can access if they wish to, for example sexual health support services.

Young people who are in full time education are making good progress and their attendance is much improved. Others who have left school are engaging with courses at college and are continuing to look for employment. Young people talk proudly about working in a restaurant and the skills they picked up during this time. Young people who have educational support at home feel they are making progress and say that they know staff are working to get them a 'proper school place'.

Young people benefit from frequent and well-managed contact with their family and other important people in their lives. Staff work hard to ensure that young people

find seeing their families to be a safe, positive and enjoyable experience. They regularly supervise contact so that young people can meet with family and friends in a safe environment, although, staff have had no formal training in this area. Staff have actively encouraged and supported young people to re-establish contact with their family. This includes arranging for young people to stay overnight with family members to solidify these bonds. Staff work effectively with young people, families, social workers and support services to make sure that contact is a rewarding experience that promotes young people's relationships.

Young people make a positive contribution to the running of the home. Young people are developing a wide range of skills and experiences in preparation for their transition into adulthood. This is because they choose the menu and develop practical skills, including shopping, buying, cooking and keeping food and washing clothes. Young people are more able to manage their own finances. They talk confidently about the decisions they are making for when they leave such as remaining in the area and getting their own place. Social workers are pleased with the progress young people are making. They say the home has been 'excellent' for young people as they have developed a range of independence skills and effectively supported their education.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy very positive and constructive relationships with staff. They are confident to talk to staff about everyday events and any issues that may be concerning them. Young people's views are actively sought with regards to them and the running of the home. Young people feel valued as staff listen to them and take their views seriously. This openness enables staff to be responsive to the young people's needs. A young person said, 'Staff have helped me turn my life around - they never gave up on me.'

Young people understand how to make a complaint and know that staff will address their concerns, for example, addressing issues of bullying within the home. There is plenty of friendly interaction between young people and staff. Staff are positive role models who use effective communication skills to enhance young people's awareness of socially acceptable behaviour. This means young people are generally polite and respectful towards staff and others.

Young people are included in their care planning and are confident to attend their review meetings. Staff have a good understanding of the diverse needs of each young person and plan effectively to meet these needs in practice. This results in young people being able to fully engage with and celebrate religious festivals and have the support they needed during this period of time. Placement plans provide a detailed picture of their personal needs. As a result, young people receive a service which is tailored to their personal needs, cultural background and personal identity. Social workers say the staff have been 'brilliant' with the young people in supporting their contact with family and ensuring they attend their appointments.

Young people live in a healthy environment which promotes their physical health and emotional well-being. They are fully supported to develop healthier lifestyles. Young people are registered with the appropriate health care professionals and have a good understanding of where to seek additional support or advice. Young people's emotional health needs are well supported and young people access mental health services where appropriate to promote their emotional well-being.

Staff have high aspirations for young people's educational achievements and future employment opportunities. They work effectively with young people to help them achieve their individual goals. This commitment is recognised by a range of professionals who say staff work well with advocacy services if young people are at risk of exclusion, showing poor attendance or displaying challenging behaviour in school. This means they can implement strategies to support young people before the behaviour escalates; as a result there have been no exclusions for some considerable time. Professionals say this can be attributed to the professionalism of the staff and the way they support, motivate and prioritise young people's education.

Young people enjoy a wide range of interesting activities within the community and beyond. They are particularly pleased with their certificates for completing an indoor sky dive which they say was great fun. Young people enjoy spending time with each other and staff who they say are 'great to be with'. The range of activities provided enables young people to try new things and broaden their horizons.

Young people live in a warm, welcoming, homely environment. Young people's bedrooms are personalised and reflect their interests and individual tastes. The home is generally well maintained. Although there are signs of mould in some shower cubicles and the floor in one bathroom is showing signs of wear. Unoccupied bedrooms are in need of cleaning and preparation prior to new young people arriving. Young people are making use of the rear garden to play football and other games.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say that they feel safe here. They are protected because staff have a sound understanding of the home's safeguarding procedures. This means they are clear on the action to take should they have any concerns about a young person. Staff are committed to preserving the confidentiality, dignity and privacy of young people. Positive relationships with social workers and other professionals mean staff are fully aware of any issues which may impact upon young people's safety or well-being and they are able to take appropriate action to support each young person. However, a recent event has highlighted shortfalls in the implementation of the home's safeguarding procedures, resulting in a delay in reporting concerns to the local authority designated officer (LADO), although once the notification had been made, the home took swift action in response to the LADO's recommendations. This action supported young people's safety and well-being. The recently appointed

safeguarding officer for the company has not yet completed training appropriate for this role. This lack of training may have contributed to the initial slow response from the organisation.

Some young people do go missing. The home works well with police and other agencies to ensure young people return home quickly and safely. Staff are proactive should a young person be missing; they actively search to try and locate them. This is confirmed by police missing from care coordinators who say until recently there had been a decrease in the incidents of young people going missing. Missing from care risk assessments are in place but some lack detail. However, the impact of this is reduced as staff are aware of the risks associated with each young person, where they may go and are working with them to help them reduce these and keep themselves safe.

Young people know and understand the house rules. Staff implement clear, consistent boundaries, which means that young people know what is expected of them and what is unacceptable. Staff are positive role models who encourage positive behaviour by offering praise and encouragement. Sanctions are proportionate and the records of these are generally well maintained, although they do not always make clear in the record if a young person was asked about the sanction and refused to make a comment.

Young people say that living in the home has 'changed them for the better'. They say previously they 'would not have thought twice about punching someone in anger', but staff have 'taught me self-control, they have helped me a lot'. The staff are proactive in helping young people resolve any conflicts within the home and take appropriate action to address any issues of bullying. Consequently, young people are able to consider their actions and how they can handle situations differently in the future.

Young people live in a physically safe environment. They are protected from any hazards by an appropriate range of health and safety procedures, risk assessments and checks. Staff carry out regular health and safety checks to ensure the premises are safe and young people know what to do in case of an emergency. However, on occasion risk assessments are not updated in a timely manner for example, updating the homes risk assessments in light of recent events.

The recruitment and selection arrangements for people working at the home are thorough to make sure young people are protected. The provider ensures that staff have the skills and competencies to meet the needs of individual young people. The vetting of visitors to the home is robust and ensures the safety and well-being of young people.

Leadership and management

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

The home is managed by a qualified and experienced manager. A Statement of

Purpose is available to placing authorities, parents and young people. This means they are appropriately informed about the type of care provided to young people. However, the home has not sent a copy of the revised Statement of Purpose to Ofsted. This is an oversight and does not impact upon the care provided.

Staff feel supported by the Registered Manager and have a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities. Staff confirm support and guidance is always available and helpful. Regular one-to-one supervision monitors performance, accountability and identifies individual development needs.

Young people are cared for by a team of staff who have a range of skills and experience. This enables them to provide good support to young people. The staff team reflects young people's cultural backgrounds and provides both positive male and female role models. Staff hold a recognised qualification or are working towards one. There is a rolling programme of training provided, including refresher training in mandatory areas.

The home has a history of good compliance. Three recommendations were raised at the last inspection. The home has improved upon its transparency with regards to the monitoring of the home. This is because copies of the managers monitoring reports are now sent to Ofsted twice a year. Also, the person conducting monitoring visits on behalf of the organisation consults with parents when appropriate, young people and staff as part of their visit. Records of key work sessions are generally more detailed and provide insight into the discussions, outcomes and agreed actions with the young person.

The home's written records provide information about individual young people's needs, development and progress. However, the home's internal health care plans, young people's individual risk assessments and records of young people's concerns are not always sufficiently detailed. The impact of this is minimised as staff have a clear understanding of their needs, vulnerabilities and risks associated with them. There are generally appropriate systems in place for notifying Ofsted of any significant issues within the home.

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.