

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 from 10 years to 17 years. The home cares for young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties, and drug or alcohol dependence, from many parts of England and Wales. The home is 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 **good**.

Young people enjoy positive relationships with staff and clearly state they feel valued and listened to. This enables them to talk about any concerns or issues they may have and to receive the right support and guidance. Staff have a secure understanding of the home's safeguarding and missing from care procedures. This means that they are able to take swift, effective action to support young people and protect them from harm. Staff are aware of each young person's vulnerabilities. Consequently, they effectively work in partnership with placing authorities and young people to help keep them safe.

Young people's needs are effectively met through personalised care planning. This means young people are able to make good progress across all aspects of their welfare and development, such as achieving at school. This is echoed by social workers who comment upon how young people see staff 'as their family,' and comment upon how much young people have progressed since residing here. However, some risk assessments relating to behaviour and missing from care are not sufficiently detailed to inform staff of specific issues.

The home is well led by a committed leadership team. The Registered Manager is aware of the strengths of the home and areas for improvement, such as ongoing staff development. Monitoring of the home is appropriate and assists the leadership team in driving forward improvements. Staff are generally well supported, which means they have a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities. Records and documentation are generally well maintained and provide insight into each young

person's time in the home although, there are shortfalls within key worker records. Most identified risks within the home are minimised. The Registered Manager works effectively with staff to help improve and sustain the outcomes for young people. This has resulted in a decrease in police involvement in the home. This commitment is recognised by the staff and other professionals.

As a result of this inspection one statutory requirement and five recommendations are made. These relate to: fire prevention; record keeping; staff supervision; some risk assessments and maintenance of the home. The leadership team has already begun to address these issues.

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
32 (2001)	consult with the fire and rescue authority and take adequate precautions against the risk of fire in particular the wedging open of fire doors. (Regulation 32 (1) (a))	20/07/2012

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 avoidable risks are removed with particular regard for the fire escape, flat roof and the front door (NMS 10.3)
- ensure the home meets young people behavioural needs as set out in the care plan, in particular behaviour management risk assessments are sufficiently detailed (NMS 3.7)
- enhance the care and support provided to young people minimises the risk that they will go missing in particular, the missing from care risk assessments are sufficiently detailed (NMS 5.1)
- ensure staff are provided with regular supervision (NMS 19.4)
- ensure information is recorded clearly and in a way that will be helpful to young people when they access their files now or in the future in particular their key worker records. (NMS 22.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people have a positive view of themselves and a secure understanding of their background and family ties. They are increasing in maturity, for example they are more able to talk about and deal with difficult situations in a productive manner. Social workers say young people 'have turned their lives around' and had they not resided at the home their outcomes may not be as positive. Young people have strong links with their families and friends and enjoy the opportunities to see them on a regular basis. Contact arrangements are managed very well and take into account the individual needs of each young person. This means young people are able to build and sustain positive relationships with those people who are important to them. This is echoed by social workers who say contact is achieved by 'effectively supporting and facilitating contact arrangements'.

Young people are developing an understanding of their own health care needs. They are generally fit and well and are confident to talk to staff if they are feeling unwell. Young people hold honest discussions with staff regarding potential ongoing health care issues. They enjoy a very healthy and nutritious diet, which effectively takes into account their individual cultural and religious needs. Young people are actively encouraged to try new foods to improve upon their diet. Young people say they now think 'fresh food is ok'. Young people take pleasure in helping staff to prepare meals and plan the weekly menu. Young people's personal care is good and they confidently take responsibility for their own needs.

Young people make informed choices about their health as a result of the excellent guidance they receive from staff. A number of staff are trained to deliver advice on sexual health. This enables young people to consider how to keep themselves and others safe and consider the consequences having of unprotected sex. Despite the advice they receive on the dangers of smoking and recreational drugs some young people choose to continue with some of these activities. They are engaging with other agencies, for example child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS) and the home's psychologist. This enables them to talk through any issues or worries they may have and consider how they can address these. Young people are aware of other health services in the community that they can access if they want to.

Young people are making very good progress in their educational placements. Young people's preferences are taken into account and they have real opportunities to study and get work experience in areas that interest them. This means that young people receive considerable support to help them succeed and achieve. Social workers say 'they have done really well at school' and young people have high aspirations for themselves such as becoming an accountant. Young people are pleased that they have achieved a number of GCSE passes and are anxiously awaiting further results. Young people have secured college places to study mechanics and are complimentary about the support from staff in achieving this. Some young people are now engaged in part-time employment and are really enjoying the opportunities to earn their own monies and do something that they enjoy. This is echoed by Independent Reviewing Officers who report on their increasing progress in relation to

their maturity, self-responsibility and their employment. Young people's achievements are celebrated and acknowledged in recognition of their positive progress.

Staff prepare young people for independence at a rate that is appropriate to their age and level of understanding. This helps prepare them for a successful transition into adult life. Individual needs are assessed and addressed in a way that promotes young people's dignity and privacy. This means differences are acknowledged and respected, for example, religious practice is very well supported. Young people are confident to manage their own finances and to take part in shopping, planning meals and to undertake a range of household chores. Consequently, young people are developing a wide range of skills and experiences in preparation for their transition into adulthood.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy 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 individual well-being is central to practice. Staff see young people in a positive and realistic light. Staff work with young people in an understanding, compassionate way, providing individual support and reassurance. Young people say 'staff helped me to sort everything out, it is good here, no problems and the staff are great' Young people nominated the Registered Manager for an award which they have received. Young people said: 'They have been like a parent to me and I feel without their support and guidance, I would have fallen into criminality. Instead I turned my life around and I wanted to give something back to them.'

Young people's views are important to staff and enable the home to drive forward improvements. This includes the creation of a prayer room and adaptations to a bathroom to meet young people's religious and cultural needs. This means young people are able to engage in the teachings of their religion in a respectful manner. The home's commitment to valuing, supporting and respecting the diverse cultural and religious needs of young people is a strength of the setting.

Regular house meetings facilitate young people's opportunities to have a say about things, including activities and the menu. Young people are fully aware that on some occasions staff may not be able to grant their wishes, but know that staff will always explain why. Young people feel listened to because staff take on board their requests, such as where to go on holiday. They enjoy the opportunities to plan their activities on a weekly basis; they say this is flexible and works well for them. Young people are aware of who they can talk to if they have any concerns or wish to make a complaint. Young people show increasing confidence as they talk about what is going well for them and are confident to make comment in the compliments book.

Young people are fully included in their care planning and are confident to attend

their review meetings. Staff have an excellent understanding of the diverse needs of each young person and plan effectively to meet these needs in practice. Placement plans provide a clear 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. Placement plans are regularly reviewed to ensure they reflect any changes in their personal circumstances. Staff work very well with young people, their families and placing authorities to monitor and evaluate their progress.

Young people live in a healthy environment which actively 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 take more responsibility for their own health as they are encouraged, where appropriate, to self-administer their own medication. Health care plans are in place and include relevant information about the young people. This enables staff to meet their health care needs well in practice.

Staff have high aspirations for young people's educational achievements and future employment opportunities. Young people talk enthusiastically about how staff support them to engage with their education. Young people's attendance at school is good. Young people who are not currently in education say, 'I know staff are sorting out my new school, they have told me where everything is up to'. This includes the school they are approaching. Young people receive good support in the interim period from home tutors and staff who help them to keep up-to-date with their school work.

Young people are able to engage in a wide range of leisure activities and hobbies such as boxing, football and basketball. They say, 'staff listen to what I want to do and help me to do this'. Young people enjoy the camaraderie with staff when cheering on their preferred football team in tournaments.

Young people live in a very comfortable and homely family house in a residential neighbourhood. The house is decorated and furnished to a good standard. They are very pleased that they are able personalise their own rooms, which clearly reflect their individuality. Young people make good use of the rear garden for recreational activities and relaxation in particular playing football and having barbecues.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are safeguarded because of staff's secure understanding of the home's safeguarding and child protection procedures. This means they are clear on the action to take should they have any concerns about a young people. Staff are committed to preserving the confidentiality, dignity and privacy of young people. Positive relationships with social workers means staff are fully aware of any issues which may impact upon young people's safety or well-being. Therefore they are able to take appropriate action to support each young person.

Staff ensure the welfare of young people is paramount. They enable young people to overcome any difficulties they may face so they have an opportunity to lead happy and fulfilling lives. Young people are seen in a positive and realistic light. They live in a safe environment where they are protected from harm and have a strong sense of safety and well-being. Young people say they feel safe living in the home and 'it's like a family' Bullying is not a problem for them.

Young people occasionally go missing from the home. Staff are very aware of the young people's vulnerabilities and potential triggers for being missing. While staff are aware that some young people may try to leave the area this information is not always reflected in the missing from care risk assessments. This impacts upon the consistency and accuracy of the information. However, staff are clear on the potential dangers to young people and how these are being reduced. They work effectively with police, family members and other agencies to try and locate young people. They contact young people via mobile telephones and encourage them to return. Staff are proactive in contacting young people's known associates and go looking for them to try and locate them. Hence, young people return home quickly and safely. Police liaison officers say the home is good at reducing the incidents of young people going missing. They work well with the police and this has further improved since the introduction of new systems for reporting young people missing came into force last year.

Managers monitor how staff implement behaviour strategies to ensure appropriate action is taken which is fair and reasonable. Consequently, the home was able to identify and address inconsistencies in the managing of some young people's behaviour in relation to police involvement. This has resulted in a reduction in police involvement at the home. Risk assessments are in place with regards to behaviour management, but they do not always clearly reflect specific issues and potential triggers. However, staff are aware of these and the key words not to use when handling difficult situations. Young people acknowledge that there was a period of inconsistency. However, they say the Registered Manager and staff have 'sorted this out and everything is now ok'.

Social workers say, staff talk to young people about the potential consequences of police involvement especially as they are getting older. This enables young people to consider the consequences of their actions and how they can manage situations in a more productive manner. Clear house rules and boundaries are in place; as a result young people know what is expected of them and what is unacceptable. Staff appropriately challenge inappropriate behaviour, such as racist comments and help young people to see how this is hurtful to others. This enables young people to reflect upon their behaviour and consider more appropriate ways in which to manage their feelings. Physical interventions are rare and sanctions are reasonable..

Staff carry out regular health and safety checks of the premises including the certification for gas, electricity and fire safety. Regular fire drills mean young people and staff are aware of what to do in an emergency. However, on one occasion staff did not ensure all fire doors were closed. This was an oversight on their behalf as

they believed this was a fault on the system. Whilst this potentially impacts upon the safety of young people, it is minimised as staff are aware that all fire doors must be closed during an evacuation and at night. The Registered Manager has taken immediate action to resolve this issue. There are some maintenance issues around the home. The front door is damaged and the lock is not always working efficiently. The fire escape and flat roof outside of the kitchen are showing signs of wear and are a potential tripping hazard.

Staff recruitment practices within the home ensure all staff are suitably vetted to ensure they are suitable to work with young people. Visitors to the home are suitably vetted, are required to sign in and out and are effectively supervised throughout their visit. This helps to safeguard young people.

Leadership and management

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

The home is managed by a committed, competent and qualified Registered Manager. The home has an adequate action plan in place that sets out how the home is to develop. Staff are supportive of the Registered Manager and have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They say that the Registered Manager is always available to talk to and their positive attitude means any issues are quickly resolved. Staff are very well supported on an individual basis and receive one-to-one professional supervision. This support enables them to reflect upon their own practice and identify their future developmental needs. although, this supervision does not always happen on a regular basis, in line with company policy.

Young people are cared for by a team of staff who have a range of skills and experience. This enables staff to provide good support to the young people. The staff team reflects young people's cultural backgrounds and provides both positive male and female role models. All staff hold a recognised qualification or are working towards one. A training development plan is in place which outlines when refresher training, such as de-escalation and positive intervention, is required. Overall, this helps maintain staff knowledge and skills so they can meet the needs of young people.

The Statement of Purpose and young person's guide are shared with young people, their families and placing authorities. These are well written, helpful documents which provide a clear picture of the home's aims and objectives. This means placing authorities, young people and their families are well aware of the care and support young people can expect to receive. Social worker's say, 'staff often go above and beyond what is expected of them, they have helped young people turn their lives around'.

Records and documentation are usually well maintained and generally provide insight into young people's time in the home. However, key worker sessions do not always provide a clear picture as to what has been discussed and agreed. This impacts upon how helpful these records are to young people now or when they look back on their

time here.

The manager has taken positive action to address the three recommendations raised at the last inspection. Risk assessments now cover the whole of the children's home. Consequently, this has improved upon young people's safety as the garden is now securely fenced. The systems for the recording of medication are much improved ensuring, more accurate administration. Detailed Regulation 34 reports are now sent to Ofsted at six monthly intervals.

The home has sound systems to review the quality of care each month. The Registered Manager consistently monitors the running of the home and identifies areas for improvement. Action is taken to ensure the home meets young people's needs and promotes their welfare. The responsible individual, who is the owner of the home, also visits the home every month to monitor how well young people are being cared for. There are appropriate systems in place to notify Ofsted of any significant issues with regards to 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.