

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Seka Graovac
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The provider is a registered childcare charity and housing association that has a number of different services registered with Ofsted. This home provides care and accommodation for up to eight children and young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties, from the London borough in which they are situated.

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 works in very close partnership with other services to provide consistent and wide-ranging high quality support to young people. As a result, young people make good progress overall in relation to their starting points in all areas of their development. Staff are passionately determined to ensure that any barriers to young people's progress are challenged effectively and within the 'Working Together To Safeguard Children' agenda. Good safeguarding practice is fully embedded in the service.

Young people receive highly individualised support which addresses their diverse needs very well and leads to positive outcomes. They view the service they receive in a very positive light. They have developed good relationships with staff and feel increasingly enabled to take more responsibility for their lives.

Leadership and management arrangements are strong and effective. The promotion of equality and diversity within the service is excellent. Young people and staff have been enabled to bring forth their individual skills and talents and participate fully in the development of the service.

The areas for further development relate to further improving records of the six-monthly quality-review reports, risk assessment and medication.

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
34 (2001)	improve the reporting format for the review of the quality of care, so that it fully meets the specifications of the regulation and supply a copy to Ofsted. (Regulation 34)	16/08/2013

Recommendations

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

- improve the quality of written risk assessments (NMS 4.5)
- improve the record keeping in respect of medication. (NMS 6.15)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people are aware of potential health risks. They have become increasingly more able to make positive choices for themselves. They understand the importance of having a healthy lifestyle. They encourage each other to exercise regularly and to have a healthy and balanced diet. They enjoy food that has been freshly prepared for them in the home. They themselves are getting better at preparing healthy meals that are appetising and tasty.

Young people have easy access to health services and health support they need. Being given and reminded to take prescribed medication regularly has had a positive impact on some of their health conditions. For example, a young person with eczema has found that their skin has much improved since coming to live in this home.

Being engaged in numerous activities in the local community has given young people good opportunities to develop their social skills and achieve better social integration. They benefit from accessing education and using local leisure, recreation and entertainment facilities. Through a national campaign, they have recently raised and given money to a children's charity. They show empathy and willingness to help others and contribute positively to their communities. Their understanding of themselves and people around them is becoming deeper. The relationships with their families are becoming stronger, when safe and appropriate.

Young people have developed better self-confidence and sense of achievement. One young person stated that the home has given them a clear focus and desire to succeed, something they did not previously have. The young people of compulsory educational age have very high school attendance. They are motivated to work hard and get good marks. Other young people focus more on acquiring good life-skills and learning in more practical ways. Football is a passion for some young people in this home and they are highly committed to have a successful professional career.

Young people are always given comprehensive information about various options available to them; their constructive choices are fully supported. They actively participate in making decisions and have matured during their time at the home. Their emerging creativity and leadership skills are growing. Depending on their age, they feel confident and ready for independence and adult life. The young people who had left the home are doing well. This shows that the service has had a lasting positive impact on their lives.

Quality of care

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

Staff place the promotion of positive outcomes for young people at the centre of their practice. They are highly aware of the young people's needs, including those relating to their cultural background and personal identity. Staff ensure that those needs are fully addressed in both daily living and care planning. The home recently provided good quality support to several unaccompanied minors with limited knowledge of English language. Staff have effectively used this opportunity to enable other young people in the home to gain better understanding of the value of equality and diversity. As a result, young people have adopted more respectful attitudes towards others, regardless of where they are from. Any form of discrimination is robustly challenged.

The home provides supportive and a nurturing environment in which the individual needs of each young person are viewed holistically and met. Young people are fully involved in planning of their care. They have also had many opportunities to influence the running of the home and the delivery of care within the organisation. The examples of this include their involvement in the recruitment of staff and management, induction of trainees, decisions regarding the décor of the home and planning of a new service within the organisation.

Staff have high aspirations for all young people in the home. They work proactively with the placing authority and external services, such as health and education to ensure consistency of approach and to challenge together any barriers to young people's progress. The feedback received by Ofsted about the quality of care, working together and communication is very positive.

Professionals from different backgrounds regularly visit the home to share information and build relationships with young people. They also meet with staff to promote good practice in the home. An example of this is a mental health

professional considering with staff how they can continue to promote the emotional health of a young person who refuses to engage directly with the mental health services.

The arrangements for dealing with young people's medication are safe. The manager carries out regular audits of the medication records and any inconsistencies are swiftly addressed. However, this remains an area for further improvement to ensure that even minor errors are completely eradicated.

Staff are very proactive and consistent in supporting young people's learning and educational achievements. Staff ensure that those young people who had developed resistance towards academic learning within a formal school environment, receive good support to continue to learn and have a sense of achievement.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Staff have good understanding of what constitutes robust safeguarding practice and are able to consistently implement it in their work. Any safeguarding concerns are shared without delay with appropriate professionals on a need-to-know basis. The home has built effective working relationships with the social workers, police, the Local Safeguarding Children Board and the Local Authority Designated Officer. Staff proactively contribute to strategy meetings and consistently follow up on any decisions made. Investigations into allegations or suspicion of harm are handled fairly and in a way that promotes effective protection of everybody involved.

Young people report feeling safe in the home. They have good understanding of the risks to their safety when outside the home. They have signed individual behaviour contracts with staff and modified their behaviour to make it safer. An example of this is that they return back to the home in the evenings by the time agreed, more often than they used to. They also keep more in touch with the home when out late at night. The frequency with which young people go missing has reduced.

The home has created an atmosphere in which young people find it easy to talk about their problems and worries, as well as the risks they wish to explore as part of having new experiences and growing up. Staff are very good at facilitating open communication, containing difficult behaviour and building relationships based on trust, honesty and clear boundaries. House meetings and individual key-working sessions regularly focus on enabling young people to reflect on their behaviours and to take more responsibility for themselves. Social workers report the effectiveness of the home's behaviour management strategies as one of the main strengths of the service. They emphasise that the home has successfully managed some young people with very challenging behaviour. They praise the commitment of staff never to give up on a young person entrusted to their care. Staff always continue to search for the ways to engage the young person and to move their development forward.

There is clear evidence that key-workers review young people's written individual risk

assessments on a monthly basis. However, when closely scrutinised, these records do not fully reflect all wide-ranging strategies that have been put in place to minimise the risks. While the actual safeguarding practice is very good and often excellent, the records are not consistently of the same, very high standard. An example of this is that despite comprehensive strategies being put in practice to protect the young person from suspected sexual exploitation, this has not been given the same level of prominence in the record of this person's risk assessment.

Any signs of bullying or intimidation are robustly managed in the ways that ensures protection, but also provides learning opportunities for everybody involved. Staff have high awareness of the issues relating to undue influence and control within relationships. They ensure that young people know about gangs and how to protect themselves from their harmful influence. One young person has explored the gang sub-culture in a media project.

Sanctions are rarely used, with the young person almost always being given an opportunity to cancel the sanction by doing something positive instead, to remedy the situation. Physical interventions have been appropriately used only in exceptional circumstances to protect young people and staff from physical harm. Comprehensive records of behaviour control measures are kept and include the views of young people.

The home favours praise and positive rewards to enable young people to engage in more constructive behaviours. This has been an effective approach that builds on positive relationships and young people's growing self-regulation and confidence.

Leadership and management

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

An experienced Registered Manager has created a culture of genuine respect for everybody's uniqueness. The management is effective at empowering young people and staff to explore, strengthen and contribute their skills and talents to the further development of the service.

Well supported and trained staff are highly motivated to promote young people's welfare in line with the home's ethos and young people's individual choices. Staff are effective team players and enablers in the young people's lives.

Young people's files are well organised and contain a wealth of relevant information about them. Monthly monitoring reports of their progress clearly demonstrate the positive impact that the home has had on their lives.

Monitoring of the records and of the quality of the service is good. In addition to the frequent internal audits, an external visitor conducts monthly reviews of the conduct of the home. These reports are regularly sent to Ofsted. However, the six-monthly reports which are also required to be sent to Ofsted do not systematically cover monitoring of all aspects of the service as required. Also, the contribution of young

people, parents and placing authority to the review of the quality of the service is not always clear.

The home has a comprehensive development plan. A major refurbishment that includes new kitchen, bathrooms and windows is in progress. A number of new initiatives have also been implemented, such as increasing participation opportunities for young people through different projects, more comprehensive semi-independence programme, more focus on collating evidence that is outcome-based and a staff/trainee scheme. The organisation has also created a new post for a quality assurance and development manager in order to better support the drive for continued improvement.

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.