

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Caroline Wilson
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This is a privately-run home which provides care and accommodation for up to four young people aged 13 to 17 years old. This home caters for young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties.

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 live in a home where they have made outstanding progress in relation to their individual starting points. During the last year the home has provided stability for young people whose plan is to make the transition to independence. As a result, there is tangible evidence of an increase in young people's confidence and in their focus to achieve the high standards that they themselves and the staff have set out for them.

Parents of young people who have moved on to independence credit the care and support that their child has received in improving their relationship and overall outcomes for their child.

The strength of the home lies in the quality, knowledge and skills of the staff team; who care and nurture young people as they would they own. They provide regular counselling and display positive role modelling for young people to follow.

Staff keep up-to-date with topical issues that are relevant to young people and they know the importance of providing a structured routine for young people; this ensures young people meet their full potential. They build constructive relationships with partner agencies, particularly with the local Police Community Support Officers which helps them achieve this.

The home is not overall outstanding, as the strengths relate to the positive relationships which are enjoyed rather than to the overall management systems in the home. Policies and procedures in the home are good and provide guidelines for

staff in promoting and safeguarding the welfare of young people. Supervision has mostly been undertaken at appropriate intervals, but there have been occasions where there have been gaps. This has not negatively impacted on the outcomes for young people.

One statutory requirement for improvement has been made in respect of ensuring regular quality assurance in line with Regulation 34. One recommendation for improvement has been made; to ensure that there is internet access for young people so that they can access educational and leisure resources which promotes their learning and development.

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)	ensure that the registered person shall establish and maintain a system for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals; and improving the quality of care provided in the children's home. (Regulation 34 (1) (a) (b))	31/08/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure that young people are provided with facilities which helps them to achieve their educational goals (Standard 8.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Young people consistently have positive views about the quality of their care and their relationships with staff. They have made exceptional progress in relation to their initial starting points. Young people believe that this is because staff have their good welfare at heart, stating that staff 'treat them as they would their own child'.

Young people have an excellent understanding of all aspects of their care plan and any matters of concern to them. This is because staff keep them informed in a way that they understand. This supports young people to experience the world around

them, and to take reasonable risks that are based on informed decisions.

Young people's diverse needs are fully met in respect of their race and culture. They are happy with the arrangements in place and have developed resilience and a positive self-view of their personal identities.

Young people have clear goals in respect of their future. They have high aspirations and have confidence in their ability to meet their personal targets. They have clear pathways in place aimed at helping them gain employment in their chosen career.

Young people are well-prepared for independence. All of them have sufficient culinary skills to prepare a healthy and nutritious diet on a budget. One parent whose child had progressed on to live independently was impressed with the range of home-made meals that their child could produce. They added that they too had learnt tips from their child about producing quick, good quality meals on a low income. Young people follow examples set by staff to help achieve good standards of personal and general hygiene and cleanliness.

All young people who have been placed for some time are enrolled in educational or vocational pursuits that they are interested in. Newly placed young people without identified education placements are constructively occupied by, for instance, taking part in educational trips with staff, such as, going to the museum. However, there is no internet access that would encourage their learning on educational websites. Young people, who attend the organisation's educational facility, have met the high expectations that were expected of them in respect of their GCSE examination results.

Young people enjoy positive relationships with each other and understand how their own behaviours may impact on others. For example, how what they perceive as being banter may be experienced by others as bullying behaviour. Young people have learnt strategies to positively manage their behaviours and any conflicts that may arise. Young people are clear about levels of acceptable behaviours and have worked well to stay within the boundaries. This has led to an overall reduction in significant incidences and offending behaviours. Overall, group living has been a positive experience for young people; enabling them to enjoy warm, sibling-like relationships.

Young people participate in activities which promote their good health. They enjoy going to the gym; which helps with their overall motivation as well as to provide them with healthy bodies and minds. Young people have regular access to medical professionals, and routine and emergency appointments are undertaken as required. Young people understand the health risks associated with risk taking behaviours with regards to drugs, alcohol and sexual health.

Quality of care

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

The home's strength is in its staff and their ability to build strong and meaningful relationships with young people. Staff have excellent relationships with young people and have high aspirations for what they can achieve. They display a genuine warmth and respect for each other; which is evident in their daily interaction which is akin to a family environment.

Continual dialogue between staff and young people highlights the likely consequences of negative behaviour alongside helping young people to understand their care plans and their backgrounds.

Young people are involved in constructive debates in which can influence the way that the way that the home is run. For instance, when they feel that sanctions are unfair. Professionals have stated that staff approach young people in a 'caring and nurturing manner' and that they have been 'impressed' with the positive way in which young people have responded to this.

Robust risk assessments support young people in modifying any challenging behaviour and in developing relevant strategies. Young people say that they feel able to 'be themselves and make age appropriate mistakes without feeling judged'. Staff successfully manage challenging behaviours without the need for physical restraint or police intervention.

The home has excellent relationships with the local police. They frequently visit to keep staff aware of concerns relating to any known gangs and sexual exploitation so that young people can be kept safe with the local and wider community. The police have discussions with young people on how to keep themselves safe and build positive relationships with them. This enables the police to respond appropriately if young people stray outside of their curfews.

Contact arrangements enable young people to sustain relationships with their families and other important people in their lives. The home work alongside families and provide them with effective strategies and boundaries that can be implemented whenever the need arises. Families have credited the home in improving the quality of relationships between themselves and their child. This has enabled one young person to maintain tradition of being employed within the family business. Staff strongly understand the importance of young people having a structured day-time activity. Specifically that the lack of a daily routine can lead to anti-social behaviour or not adhering to boundaries, such as curfew time. Staff persistently and effectively communicate with local authority education departments to ensure that young people are placed in educational establishments which meet their holistic needs. Staff enlist the support of independent advocates, such as, 'The Voice', where any delay proves detrimental to the welfare of young people.

Staff are positive role models for young people and do not make assumptions that young people already possess the skills and knowledge on how to present themselves in a positive manner. Strong praise is given where improvements are made; which boosts young people's self-esteem and provides them with the impetus to make further improvements in their lives.

Young people live in a clean, comfortable home, which blends easily into the residential neighbourhood. Their bedrooms reflect their individual styles and preferences.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

There is a good approach to child protection in the home. Staff are trained to recognise and report any suspicions or concerns without delay. Staff have an excellent understanding on topical matters that are important to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of young people. In addition to the mandatory training, they have recently undertaken training in the prevention and awareness of young people's involvement in gang related activity and sexual exploitation. This knowledge is shared with young people so that they are aware of how to protect themselves while out in the community.

There is a reward and sanctions system in place. The sanctions given are reasonable and in line with good parenting. Staff recognise that the frequent sanctioning of young people can be counter-productive and that young people may feel disheartened if a number of sanctions have been administered. In these circumstances, they provide young people with the opportunity to 'work off' these sanctions, by doing additional housekeeping chores, for instance, sweeping up the leaves in the back garden.

Young people are rarely missing; the home has clear practices and agreed arrangements with the local police; these support effective action being taken in the event that young people do go missing or have unauthorised absence, staff keep in constant contact. They have details of the people who are important to young people so that staff can monitor their whereabouts and welfare and facilitate their safe return home. These procedures protect young people as far as possible during their absence and they are treated positively on their return. The police speak with young people on their return to assess any risk factors that may be a cause or consequence of their absence.

Complaints are addressed appropriately, within relevant timescales. External complaints are taken seriously and remedial action taken to ensure continual good relationships with neighbours within the community. Young people are involved in this, where relevant.

Staff ensure that the home is a safe environment for the young people to live in. There is an appropriate system of risk assessments, portable appliance testing and other health and safety arrangements in place. Fire records are up to date, with the home carrying out fire drills as required.

Leadership and management

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

The Registered Manager provides effective leadership. There are excellent arrangements in place for staff to deputise in the absence of the Registered Manager. The deputy manager has completed the Level 5 Leadership and Management Certificate and evidences effective leadership of the home. Young people, families and professionals speak highly of their interaction with the deputy manager and other staff within the unit. Family members of young people who have successfully moved on to independent living have credited the home's involvement for improving outcomes in their child's life. One family member added that the only improvement that they felt the home needed was, 'to clone the deputy manager, so there were more of them.'

The home has evidenced a capacity for improvement. All the statutory requirements that were set at the last inspection were met at the interim inspection. One complaint was received by Ofsted. This matter was investigated and no further action taken, due to the robust and proactive manner in which the home responded to the complainant.

Regular visits take place by an independent person, to monitor the conduct of the home in line with Regulation 33. This ensures that the home is operating in accordance with its Statement of Purpose. This quality assurance monitoring is effective. It ensures that the home continues to provide a good service for young people and make sure that any recommendations are quickly acted upon.

Quality assurance monitoring, in line with Regulation 34 has not been completed as required by Regulations. The home is therefore not identifying any themes or patterns that may occur. However, the lack of this reporting has not negatively impacted on the overall care of young people.

Staff receive regular training which provides them with a good theoretical basis for ensuring that the home is a positive experience for young people. Staff provide them with the support and stability that they need to prepare them for transition of the responsibilities of adulthood. Supervision is of good quality and enables staff to respond well to the needs of young people as well as highlighting any developmental needs that they may have. However, these are not always be conducted at appropriate intervals. The good outcomes evidenced in young people's progress illustrates that staff have put what they have learned into practice effectively.

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.