

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Pamela Nuckley
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The service is run by an established private provider. The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four young people with attachment disorders.

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 are at different stages of investing in their placement. However, all young people are making measurable progress. Young people benefit from tailored and individual care which incorporates their holistic needs. This is achieved through effective and high quality support based on individual needs and knowledge of young people's particular vulnerabilities. This is complemented by detailed placement plans, risk assessments and behaviour management plans. Therefore, the staff have the knowledge and strategies to support young people through difficult periods in their lives.

Young people are consistently consulted about events in the home and encouraged to make their own choices and increase their own responsibility for their futures. This consultation process has allowed young people to make changes within the home. Therefore, young people say they are listened to and can influence change within the home.

Young people feel safe and are protected by pro-active practice to safeguard them. Staff are knowledgeable about their roles and responsibilities in protecting young people. Professionals also confirm that staff fully discuss any safeguarding concern and take appropriate action.

Young people's physical, emotional and psychological health needs are met and they understand the importance of healthy living. They are in education, their attendance has improved and they have aspirations to attend colleges. They are encouraged to take part in a range of activities in the community, with varying degrees of success

and they go on trips out and holidays. Young people develop life skills and their independence is maximised and promoted, as far as possible, while ensuring they are safe.

The home is well managed and efficiently run. The staff team is stable, experienced and committed to meeting the needs of the young people. They work together under the positive leadership of the manager to provide highly consistent care. The manager understand the strengths and weaknesses of the home and development plans demonstrate on-going improvement.

One recommendation is made relating to signing records.

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 all records are clear and up-to-date; this is specifically in relation to ensuring that all documentation is signed by the relevant parties. (NMS 22)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people make good progress in developing a positive self-view and are gaining confidence and skills. They are involved in their care plans and are assisted and supported to add their contributions. They are able to share their wishes, views and feelings and are fully involved in decision making about their future plans and day-to-day life in the home. For example, some young people attend ice-skating as a hobby and attend weekly events. However, they had to leave the venue early due the end of staffs' shifts. Through consultation, rotas were changed to allow young people to fully enjoy and engage with their peers.

Relationships between staff and young people are good and young people are keen to relate that they feel respected, valued and well cared for. Young people state that they have confidence in the staff team who look after them.

Young people say they have people outside of the home who they can contact directly should they have any concerns and they also have access to an independent advocacy service. One young person said, 'Staff write down any negative things we say, even when we are joking. They tell me this is because they take any concerns seriously. I think this is good because sometimes there's some truth in it.' Another young person said, 'I have made a few complaints but I am happy that they get sorted quickly and it shows that they take me seriously.' Therefore, young people feel fully supported to raise any issues about their care.

Young people's physical, emotional and psychological needs are well met. They have access to appropriate health professionals and have information about healthy living so that they can make informed decisions and choices. Every young person has a health care plan that includes all of the required information as part of their wider placement plan. The home has appropriate consents in place that allow for emergency treatment if needed. Young people confirm that staff support them to attend medical appointments and that all health issues are dealt with promptly. Therefore, young people say they are fit and healthy.

Young people who have recently been admitted to the home say that they felt welcomed. They confirm that they received a welcome booklet and said staff had gone through this booklet with them on several occasions. Therefore, they are clear on the boundaries, allowances and services that the home provides. They are really happy with their bedroom and do not wish it to be decorated as they love the colour. Young people say that an abundance of activities are offered to them and they are able to follow individual pursuits.

Young people benefit from contact with their friends and families and are making and maintaining positive relationships. Young people are supported by staff wherever necessary during family visits. Placement plans and contact records make explicit the authorised arrangements for contact between each young person, their family, friends and their social workers. As a result, young people are enjoying constructive and safe contact with people who are important to them.

Staff guide and encourage young people in their educational pursuits, with good results. Strong links have been forged between the home and educational provisions. Although young people say that they do not like school they acknowledge that education is important and that staff encourage not only their regular attendance, but also offer practical support, for example helping with homework.

Quality of care

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

An outstanding feature of this home is the resounding effort that staff put in to make sure that young people know that staff care for them. Staff remain positive and work with therapists and professionals through difficult periods of time. The consistency of their approach and excellent understanding of how to apply the agreed strategies ensures that young people receive the same message. Therefore, young people receive excellent care in line with exceptional individual placement and day-to-day care plans. Needs in relation to young people's cultural and sexual identity, beliefs and gender are comprehensively addressed in care plans and, once identified, followed through in practice. Young people benefit from reviewing their care plans together with their key workers, enabling them to recognise and actively build upon social skills, leisure activities, achievements and progress.

Staff have high aspirations for the young people, and advocate strongly on their behalf, for example, to ensure they are treated fairly and with respect and that their

wishes and views are taken into account. Young people are central to their care and their views and feelings are integral to daily practice. Young people use residents' meetings, key-work sessions and simple conversations with staff to express their wishes and feelings.

Excellent records show that young people are confident to use the complaints system. Any complaints received are clearly recorded to reflect outcomes, including actions taken by staff and management to resolve the issue along with young people's responses. Monthly monitoring by the visiting officer offers further opportunities for young people to comment upon the quality of their care. Any cases where it is not possible to act upon young people's wishes are sensitively explained to them.

Education is highly valued and excellent links with a number of learning providers exist, creating a range of opportunities. As good parents, staff attend personal education plan meetings and parents' evenings to support young people. This makes young people feel cared for and important. Further to this, staff celebrate any achievements whether large or small. One staff member said, 'By celebrating the small things, bigger positive steps are made by the young people.' A young person said, 'I went to Alton Towers because I got a good end-of-year school report. It was brilliant.' Therefore, young people see the positive outcome of all their hard work.

Health promotion ensures that young people know what constitutes a healthy diet and a healthy lifestyle. Staff ensure that they have knowledge about health services and health promotion agencies and work together with medical staff to meet individual's specific health needs. Young people benefit from a strong focus on their psychological health and well-being. Young people receive therapeutic services on a weekly basis to address past difficulties. The arrangements for the administration of medication are safe and effective in protecting the young people.

Young people enjoy living in a large, detached, comfortably furnished bungalow in a quiet residential neighbourhood. Young people choose decorations and personalise their rooms. There are good levels of bathing, showering and toileting facilities in the home for young people's use. The home's lounge, dining area and garden are spacious and well used by the group. Young people confirm they are happy with their individual and communal living space. A comprehensive range of leisure amenities are available in the nearby large town.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Staff are trained in safeguarding procedures. They know how to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse and they understand how to manage and report any concerns they identify in order to keep young people safe. Individual risk assessments address all aspects of young people's care and behaviour. Risk assessments clearly identify how staff will support young people to protect them and keep the home safe. These are reviewed regularly to ensure that they continue to be

appropriate to young people's needs. There are close links in place with the local safeguarding children board and safeguarding procedures are available to all staff. Staff are very clear on these safeguarding procedures and would know what to do to protect a child. Due to the effective arrangements in place to ensure that young people are cared for safely, young people themselves say that they feel safe in the home.

Staff work well with young people and supervise them appropriately to reduce the risk of them going missing. Staff are clear about the procedure they need to follow should an incident occur. They work closely with the police and other agencies to ensure that young people are protected as far as possible if they are away from the home and to promote their safe return. Due to the good systems in place the need to report young people missing has significantly reduced. Young people are protected by staff being alert to the potential for bullying or intimidating behaviour and young people do not raise this as a concern.

Young people are at different stages of their development and placement. As a result, some young people have struggled recently in maintaining positive behaviours due to traumatic events in their lives such as bereavement, placement breakdown or with past trauma. Therefore, there has been a high level of physical intervention. However, the manager is proactively ensuring that young people know that they will be there for them. They are also assessing the situation on a weekly basis by completing weekly impact risk assessments and liaising with social workers. Debriefing young people after physical intervention ensures they understand the reasons for staff actions. The manager states, 'We do this to ensure that we are not part of the problem, that we can learn from the young people and that they know that there are other ways that they can express themselves safely.' Care staff are trained in methods of care and control and they respond positively to challenging behaviour. In balance to this, other young people in the home have developed social and life skills and have learnt safe, appropriate and positive ways to manage their disappointments, frustrations and anger. Exceptional personalised behaviour management strategies contain proactive steps, planned with young people, for staff to follow when managing their behaviour.

Sanctions are very minimal and young people feel that when they are given, that they are fair. Young people provide written comments on the use of sanctions which provides opportunities to learn from their behaviour. Young people are rewarded for positive behaviour through monetary gain, additional activities or personal items. One young person contributes the success of this system to their good behaviour at school.

The home has a robust recruitment and selection procedure which ensures that all staff are vetted before they begin their employment. Visitors are checked before being allowed into the home. These arrangements protect young people as they prevent unauthorised individuals gaining access to the home. Effective monitoring and whistleblowing procedures, complemented by a buddying system developed by the manager to oversee new staff during their probationary period, ensures that young people are not cared for by people who pose a risk to them.

Good attention is paid to safety and equipment checks to maintain a healthy environment. Frequent fire drills ensure young people can safely exit the home and they understand the importance of this. Young people are safeguarded by these measures.

Leadership and management

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

The Registered Manager provides effective leadership and guidance to the staff team who say they are well supported, supervised and managed. The manager is described as approachable and available to them. Open discussion is promoted and this allows staff to reflect on practice with a view to improving outcomes for young people.

There is a stable, experienced and skilled staff team who are enthusiastic and child focused. They work together and support each other in often demanding situations. Sufficient staff are on duty in the home to provide the necessary levels of supervision to the young people. This allows young people to keep appointments, have visits with family and go on activities. Team meetings, handovers and effective communication result in continuity of care and consistency of response.

Staff are positive about the range and quality of training and say they are well supervised, enabling them to meet the young people's needs. Staff are encouraged to take on roles and responsibilities as part of their professional development. All but the new members of staff have achieved appropriate qualifications.

The home is well monitored and audited and any concerns are addressed by the manager. Visits are carried out by the monitoring visitor on a regular basis and reports inform the manager's monitoring. In addition to monitoring individual care on a day-to-day basis, the management team regularly seek the views of young people, their parents and professionals on the service provided. Positive comments are built upon and any identified shortfalls promptly addressed. As result, there is a clear development plan for the service.

The comprehensive Statement of Purpose clearly outlines the aims and objectives of the home and of the care provided. Therefore, social workers, parents and significant others understand the ethos and service provided by the home. The Registered Manager communicates and notifies agencies, including Ofsted, of significant information, ensuring young people are protected by multi-agency decision making.

The one recommendation set at the last inspection has been addressed. All staff have received training in bereavement and loss. A member of staff said, 'This training was really beneficial not only in supporting young people but in dealing with our own emotions.'

Young people's records are detailed and well structured; these are held securely and

confidentially. However, some paperwork is unsigned by the relevant parties. For example, a young person's placement plan and risk management plan are unsigned by the author, social worker, parent and manager. This does not show whether all parties are in agreement with the plans.

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.