

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Heather Chaplin
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is one of two run by a limited company. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to a maximum of four young people, who may 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**.

All young people in the home have made very good progress in every aspect of their daily lives. They are happy, settled and safe in the home, valuing their relationships with staff and the opportunities available to them. One young person said, 'it's the best children's home in the world'.

The home offers high quality care to meet young people's diverse needs. Since the last inspection, the home has worked very effectively with young people who have been unable to manage previous placements, those who repeatedly went missing and showed other forms of risk-taking behaviour. One social worker commented, 'it is a credit to the home that my young person is still there, as their previous residential placement broke down.'

Young people feel safe and are safe in the home. Between the last and the present inspections, a young person was placed in the home whose needs had not been fully conveyed to the service and hence, could not be met. Although this young person's behaviour did have a negative impact on other young people, the service acted swiftly to address the issues. The situation is now stable and young people are no longer at risk from others' behaviour. The service has learned from this experience and will seek much more detailed information in future.

The home is well managed, with good monitoring practices and a clear plan for improvement. The Registered Manager sets high standards and places children and young people at the centre of all the home's activities.

The two recommendations from the last inspection have been met. Although a requirement has been made on this occasion, this relates to paperwork shortfalls and does not directly impact on young people's welfare and safety. This requirement had been met within a few days of the inspection. A recommendation has also been made in relation to higher-level training for staff in one specific area.

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
23 (2001)	ensure that all parts of the home to which children have access are so far as reasonably practicable free from hazards to their health or safety; in particular, ensure that the home's fire risk assessment is updated annually and that potential hazards from contact with wild animals in the vicinity of the home have been risk assessed. (Regulation 23 (1) (a))	30/06/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure that staff are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of the children and the purpose of the setting; in particular, ensure that all staff receive formal training in working with young people who are at risk from child sexual exploitation. (NMS 18.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Children and young people with diverse individual needs have all made very good progress at this home. Young people confirm that they feel happy and settled, that they are well looked after and safe. Young people are beginning to develop attachments, resilience and increase their self confidence as a result of living in this home. One young person said, 'I love this place to bits...the staff have helped me with lots of things.'

Young people enjoy healthy lifestyles and participate in preparing high quality meals. They are registered with doctors, dentists and opticians to help ensure that they

receive routine medical checks and prompt treatment if they need it. Young people have excellent access to support with their emotional health. This ensures that they start to address long-term issues that could otherwise limit their life chances.

Young people are fully involved in day-to-day decisions in the home. They contribute their views through regular meetings and constant communication with staff and the Registered Manager. This helps to ensure that young people have ownership of decisions made in the home and that they can start to take personal responsibility.

Young people understand that some behaviours are harmful to them and cause concern to others. They have begun to address some of these behaviours and although at different stages in this process, all have made very good progress. For example, one young person who ran away constantly from a previous placement and travelled long distances alone, has now matured significantly and is able to visit the places they wish to go on public transport, and keep to collection arrangements with staff.

Young people have made good progress in attending school and other educational resources since their arrival in the home. Some young people were barely attending at all, or were using school as a means to run away from previous placements. Since arrival at this home, all young people have accepted education and understand the need to work towards qualifications to help them in the future.

Social workers confirm that for some young people, school attendance was sporadic and they were underachieving before coming to live at this home. Their educational attendance has increased substantially since admission. Consequently, young people's educational attainment has also increased. One young person has worked particularly hard and has increased her achievements considerably since settling to regular school attendance. Some young people receive home tutoring, which meets their needs more effectively than attending college or school. These young people are also making good progress.

Young people enjoy regular contact with families and friends, in line with their care plans. This helps young people to develop and maintain their identities within their home communities. Most young people in the home are too young to start formal independence programmes, but all participate in some degree of self-care according to their interests and needs.

Quality of care

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

Young people confirm that staff are consistently care about them; their wishes, needs and daily welfare. Young people currently living in the home relate well to each other and also enjoy excellent relationships with staff.

Staff use these positive relationships to engage with young people and help them to achieve their personal objectives. Positive behavioural strategies are effective in

helping young people to change aspects of their lives that have proved unhelpful to them in the past.

The home conducts regular meetings with young people to ascertain their views. The Registered Manager responds to young people clearly and when possible, plans future developments with young people's views in mind. Young people actively participate in planning menus and activities with staff.

The home has an effective complaints procedure, that young people understand and feel able to access. Young people confirmed that they feel able to raise any concerns with staff.

Individual placement planning recognises each young person's unique needs. The home works well with placing authorities to ensure that young people's needs are fully documented and can be met. Social workers confirm that the home keeps them up to date and say the level of staff support for young people is very good, irrespective of their varying and often complex needs. One social worker commented, 'I've been really pleased with the home. The staff are very accommodating and approachable; they are proactive in supporting education...they have built up a really good rapport with (my young person). They have realistic expectations and understand the issues. I've been really impressed with opportunities for outings.'

The home actively involves young people in planning for and reviewing their care. Social workers commented on the exceptional work done by the home's psychologists, who are commissioned from a service operating in the same locality. This work is instrumental in providing highly skilled therapeutic input to all young people, as well as frequent consultation to the manager and staff team. For example, the psychology team is consulted about every incident and event, so that they have an input into any adjustments to the care plan.

One psychologist commented that the home has achieved extremely good outcomes for the young people. There is a coherent behavioural management system and all three young people engage with and participate in therapy, which makes a significant difference to their life chances.

This means that the home offers expert care that is consistent and reliable. As a result, young people's needs are met and they make rapid but sustainable progress towards their goals. In addition, staff have ready access to specialised consultation to help them understand and respond to young people's changing and complex presenting difficulties.

Staff work very well with other agencies, such as the police and educational services. This helps to ensure that young people receive consistent messages and that there is a joined-up approach to their care.

The home provides a pleasant rural environment for young people. The house is situated in a large forest and provides a unique and very attractive setting in which young people can relax and reflect. The house has six bedrooms, two of which are

sleeping in rooms for staff. There are four bedrooms for young people. The house has a pleasant and homely lounge and an education room. There is a large woodland garden, where small pets are kept. This enhances young people's experiences of being looked after and helps them learn to take responsibility.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people report that they now feel safe in the home, although since the last inspection, one young person has been subject to inappropriate behaviour from a peer, whose actions had a significant impact on young people. The home responded swiftly to address the situation by giving notice on the placement. When the situation escalated before the young person could be moved, the home responded decisively and proactively. For example, they separated two young people and put in waking night staff to keep them safe. This situation was resolved prior to the inspection, so there are no current safeguarding issues.

There have been some incidents of going missing from the home, but now that there is a stable group of young people, the frequency and the potential seriousness of these episodes has reduced. Older young people are allowed free time, when they catch the bus into the nearest town and meet with friends. Young people concerned now reliably keep to collection times and on the rare occasions when they do not do so, staff can usually locate them. Young people are willing to discuss where they are and with whom, and never come back intoxicated, so they appear to be using their free time sensibly. Staff are well aware of the dangers of going missing and should this occur, they have a robust system in place to locate young people and persuade them to return.

There is very little physical intervention required in the home. Any use of physical intervention is well documented. Restraints, sanctions and rewards are carefully monitored to help to ensure that these are meaningful to young people.

Staff files are kept at the company's headquarters and were brought to the children's home for inspection. These are of a good standard, with clearly recorded information. The staff files show a robust recruitment process which is well supported by the necessary documentation.

Any safeguarding concerns raised by children and young people are responded to correctly and with sensitivity. Social workers confirmed that they are made aware of any issues, so that they can respond to them.

The home's environment is safe and secure. The fire risk assessment was last updated 14 months prior to this inspection, so an update is slightly overdue. This was addressed immediately after the inspection.

The home is situated in a large forest, which has wild boar roaming free. In the past, these animals have gained access to the garden, where they did a lot of damage, but

this has been addressed and the garden is now secure. However, the boar come into close proximity of the house and there is a small theoretical risk that young people may encounter them. Wild boar can be aggressive if they feel threatened and this potential risk had not been fully evaluated. The Registered Manager has now researched this potential hazard and has completed a risk assessment, so that this can be managed.

Leadership and management

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

The home has a clear, understandable and accessible Statement of Purpose and children's guide. Both meet statutory requirements and provide useful information for young people and stakeholders.

Since the last inspection, the Registered Manager, who was registered by Ofsted in December 2013, has been able to further develop the home and establish herself in her role. The Registered Manager is making good progress with her level 5 qualification in management, but has not yet completed it. However, this is within the accepted timescale.

There have been changes in the home's management team, in that two senior support workers have been appointed. The senior support workers assist the manager and have specific roles within the home; for example, by coordinating health and safety. This frees up the Registered Manager's time to focus on oversight of the service.

The Registered Manager offers clear leadership to her staff team. The standard of management monitoring is high, so the manager is well aware of the home's strengths and weaknesses. In addition, the manager has considerable day-to-day involvement with young people. This enables her to maintain a good overview of the quality of care. This is supported by the home's Regulation 33 visitor, who visits monthly and prepares useful and insightful reports. Up until now, this has been one of the company's proprietors, but there are plans in place for this role to be undertaken by an independent professional, to meet the revised regulations.

Social workers confirmed the strength of the management arrangements. One social worker said, '(The manager) is fantastic. Nothing is too much trouble...the home makes my job a lot easier.'

The home and gardens are very well maintained. There is no doubt that the service is well resourced. The Registered Manager confirmed that there is never any issue with the company about access to financial resources when they are needed.

The home has sufficient staff, who are used flexibly according to young people's needs. Waking night staff are used when necessary to help protect young people.

Staff receive good quality training, some of which is provided by the commissioned

psychology service. Although staff demonstrate good knowledge of the risk factors around child sexual exploitation, only the manager has received formal training in this area to date. This was discussed during the inspection and the manager is keen to organise this training for all staff. A recommendation has been made.

The home keeps good, secure records to document the work done and guide future plans. This ensures that young people have a permanent record which they may choose to access to help their understanding of their time in the home.

The home has very few neighbours, but the manager has very good working relationships with other agencies in the area. For example, the manager's links with schools and the local authority's virtual teaching team ensure that there is a smooth transition into education for young people coming to live at the home. There are positive relationships with the local police, which helps to support the home in case of need.

Recommendations from the last inspection have been fully addressed. Both related to recording and responding to incidents where young people had gone missing. Practice has significantly improved since that inspection. Recording is more robust and any incidents are referred to the psychologists, who work directly with young people to discuss the risks involved in this behaviour. This means that young people are now effectively debriefed by an independent person following their return to the home.

The service reports all significant events to the relevant agencies, including Ofsted, as required. This helps to ensure that there is effective communication and that the regulator is aware of any significant incidents in 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.