

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Thomas Webber
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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 **adequate**.

Overall the home continues to provide young people with an adequate quality of service. The home now has a Registered Manager and some key aspects of the care provision are good, which ensure that young people are appropriately cared for.

Young people continue to receive care from a stable and committed staff team, which is also enhanced by the greater staff morale now in place. Young people feel safe and continue to be positive about their overall experience of living at the home. Young people continue to make good progress in certain aspects of their lives.

Areas for improvement relate to ensuring that effective records are maintained for obtaining the views of young people in the day-to-day running of the home and after incidents of restraint. Staff should consistently use the correct format for recording incidents where young people go missing. Increased staff support for ensuring greater attendance of young people at their educational placements.

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 children's views, wishes and feelings are acted upon in the day-to-day running of the home (NMS 1.1)

- ensure that all children are given an opportunity to discuss incidents of restraint they have been involved in with a relevant adult (NMS 3.17)
- ensure that the written records kept by the home when a child goes missing detail action taken by staff, the circumstances of the child's return, any reasons given by the child for running away from the home and any action taken in the light of those reasons (NMS 5.10)
- ensure that children are supported to attend school, colleges or alternative provisions regularly. (NMS 8.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **adequate**.

Young people continue to make good progress within the home. The individual care and support they receive from a committed staff team and the clinical input and oversight provided assists them with this progress. Young people continue to make improvements in the management of their emotions and in their ability to take responsibility for their behaviour, albeit with the continuing intervention and support of staff.

The home ensures that young people are given opportunities to obtain their educational potential. Despite this support some young people's attendance has become erratic again which has reduced their ability to make progress in their educational aspirations.

Staff continue to ensure that agreed contact is maintained between young people and their families in line with their individual placement plans. Although staff are very committed to supporting young people in this process, the behaviour of some young people has deteriorated as a result of increased free time. The home continues to ensure that the families and the respective placing authorities are provided with regular updates on the progress and well-being of young people.

The home provides young people with the opportunity to develop their life skills. However, it does not provide young people with a specific semi-independent living programme to assist them develop the required practical and social living skills for a smooth transition towards independence.

Quality of care

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

Young people live in a caring and supportive environment. Staff are very committed to providing young people with a high level of care. The level of support young people receive contribute towards them making progress in various aspects of their lives. Young people spoke positively about the care and support they receive and their overall experience of living at the home.

Young people are fully aware of how to complain and they are supported to raise any concerns or worries openly. The home initially received one complaint since the last inspection but this was subsequently withdrawn by the young person. Previous records show that all complaints are taken seriously, promptly dealt with and suitably resolved. However, this incident does not provide a clear audit trail where discussions held between the manager and young person are appropriately dated.

Young people are provided with a range of opportunities to express their views and wishes. Young people's meetings have been recently reintroduced to allow young people to contribute to the delivery of care provided and influence the running of the home. However, the minutes of these meetings do not provide a clear audit trail in relation to what actions have been taken in response to suggestions made by young people.

Staff ensure that young people now receive consistency of care in line with their individual placement plans and associated documents. These documents provide staff with clear guidance on how to effectively support young people and meet their various individual needs on a day-to-day basis. Young people are fully involved in contributing to their placement plans and their care planning arrangements.

Young people are fully supported and given every opportunity to learn more effective strategies on how to manage their past negative behaviours in a more constructive manner. Young people are proud about the progress they have achieved. The manager was also able to evidence the significant progress achieved by young people.

The home ensures that the healthcare needs of young people are met. They are registered with the various local healthcare services and are supported to attend any appointments. Specialist support is readily available to meet the emotional and psychological needs of young people through individual therapeutic sessions. Effective clinical oversight is also provided to staff which provides them with excellent opportunities to raise and discuss any particular issues they have in relation to the care of young people. Staff, in turn, are provided with clear strategies to support young people. Appropriate arrangements are established for the safe management of medicines to promote the safety and well-being of young people.

Young people generally enjoy a varied diet, although the menu is somewhat repetitious. The menu also provides young people with the opportunity to experience meals from different cultures. Young people are provided with the opportunity to assist and take the lead in the preparation and cooking of meals. Young people generally commented positively about the quality and quantity of meals provided. However, some commented that the meals provided were not particularly healthy and the quality depends on who is cooking.

Staff recognise and support young people to attend their various educational placements which are tailored to meet their individual needs. Staff work and liaise very closely with young people's placements to ensure that good and effective

communication is maintained between them. The current young people accommodated are struggling to maintain good school attendance, despite the efforts of staff.

Young people live in an environment which is suitably maintained being clean, tidy and comfortable. It is also generally well furnished, although there are definite plans in place to refurbish and redecorate the kitchen and utility area. This work will be undertaken this summer when young people are away on holiday to minimise the disruption to them. Young people are provided with their own bedrooms, which are personalised to their individual tastes. They are fully involved in choosing their colour and bedding schemes. The premises also provide young people with suitable communal space together with sufficient bath, shower and toilet facilities meet their individual and collective needs.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people feel safe living at the home. They feel able to talk to specific members of staff about any worries and concerns they may have and also have access to members of the psychological team. The manager takes effective action by liaising promptly with all relevant agencies to any potential or safeguarding concerns. Staff have a clear understanding on how to safeguard young people, having received appropriate training. Incidents of young people going missing have decreased in respect to some individuals but have increased in relation to others. In all circumstances, staff have taken appropriate action to ensure that young people return safe at the earliest opportunity. However, robust records for these episodes are not always being maintained. Staff are not always using the latest format which identifies what action is being taken to prevent further incidents. Multi-agency meetings have recently been held where the police have raised concerns about the ability of the home to fully safeguard young people who go missing.

Young people are encouraged and supported to develop and maintain appropriate levels of behaviour. This is achieved through the use of positive reinforcement and behaviour incentives. These, together with the clinical support and positive relationships established between themselves and staff contribute to the level of progress young people achieve. Individual therapeutic behaviour support plans are established for young people which provide staff with an effective tool in helping them to manage the negative behaviour of young people. Staff are also appropriately trained in the management of challenging behaviour by utilising the low arousal approach to defuse and distract situations. This practice has helped young people to make significant progress and continues to contribute to sanctions and restraints being kept to a minimum. Although records in relation to these methods of control are maintained and monitored, they are not sufficiently comprehensive. The views of young people are not recorded when restraint is used.

Suitable arrangements are in place for the careful vetting of new staff to ensure that young people are fully protected and not exposed to unsuitable adults working at the

home. All the required checks are carried out prior to new staff commencing employment.

Young people live in a safe environment where they and staff are regularly involved in fire evacuation procedures. The various fire and health and safety testing and servicing arrangements are accurately maintained and kept up to date to safeguard young people and staff.

Leadership and management

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

Young people now benefit from living at a home which has a Registered Manager who is suitably qualified and has considerable experience in residential care. The Registered Manager is capable and committed and is having a positive impact on the care and services provided which in turn ensures good outcomes for young people.

The manager has successfully addressed the two requirements and two of the three recommendations identified at the last inspection. The improvements relate to the recording of behaviour management and providing staff with sufficient supervision and appraisal. However, young people's level of attendance and progress within their educational provision is still not being suitably maintained.

The home's Statement of Purpose provides an overview of its aims and objectives and describes the level of care, support and services young people can expect to receive. The young people's information booklet also provides them with useful information they need to know about living at the home.

The manager ensures that good staffing levels are maintained throughout the day and night. This ensures that the individual and collective needs of young people are met. Young people continue to be cared for by a stable staff team where there has been little staff turnover. The staffing structure within the home has recently changed to ensure that there is a senior member of staff on duty for most shifts. The majority of staff are suitably trained. Staff are also provided with the opportunity to enhance their knowledge, skill and expertise through on-going training. However, the level of specialist training provided to staff is currently somewhat limited.

The manager has now taken appropriate action to ensure that all staff are provided with an annual appraisal and regular formal individual supervision of a good quality. This ensures that staff receive appropriate support and their working performance is suitably monitored. In addition a range of forums are well established which enable staff to raise and discuss particular concerns relating to individual young people as well as the various working practices within the home. A particular strength of the home is the clinical oversight provided by the psychological team who provide direct individual support to young people as well as guidance and support to staff. Staff morale within the home has significantly improved since the last inspection.

All records maintained by the home are kept secure, with young people being given

every opportunity to contribute to those that specifically relate to their care.

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.