

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Julian Mason
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This is a home that provides placements for young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. It is registered to accommodate up to four children and young people. It is run by a private company.

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 feel very safe and they are protected from harm. Their families and social workers are extremely positive about the quality of care and support young people receive from their carers. The strong, meaningful relationships that exist between young people and staff facilitate constructive ways of communicating about their everyday routines and future plans. Young people's needs and views are central to the running of the home. All aspects of care planning and practice are highly personalised and tailored to consistently address each young person's individual needs. Staff work in a coordinated way with young people, their families and other professionals to ensure that the correct help and support is always provided on a daily basis. Young people make good progress and achieve positive outcomes because their needs are being comprehensively addressed.

The home is very effectively managed for the benefit of young people. Managers place a strong emphasis on providing high standards of care through continuous improvement and development. The Registered Manager's monitoring of the service enables effective and on-going improvement to further develop the home and achieve positive outcomes for all young people. Experienced and skilled staff who are well supported provide young people with a stable, consistent and nurturing environment where they can grow up safely, thrive and prepare for their future.

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
4 (2001)	supply a copy of the home's Statement of Purpose to HMCI. (Regulation 4(2))	31/08/2012

Recommendations

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

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for children and young people are **good**.

Young people are enabled to develop a positive self-view, emotional resilience, knowledge and understanding of their backgrounds and family histories. They are fully supported to develop confidence in their skills, especially around their peer and adult social interactions and relationships. Young people experience a warm, nurturing environment with clear and consistent boundaries that support improving outcomes.

Educational achievement and young people's potential is fully promoted by the staff team. Records show that education plans and statements of educational need are in place to support the work staff do with young people. Good links are maintained with schools, colleges and education providers to ensure the home is fully informed about young people's progress. Staff promote and encourage good attendance because they value and understand the benefits of education. The home supports young people to make positive choices about their future education and learning arrangements. Some young people have been assessed as having the potential to pass at least five GCSE's at grade C or above and staff are doing everything possible to support this potential success.

Young people's needs in relation to their health and well-being are being comprehensively met. Staff actively engage young people in a range of awareness raising activities and health education sessions. Young people are well informed about important matters that can affect their good health and emotional well-being. The Registered Manager ensures that there is a range of information available that promotes effective and preventive practices. For instance, young people who continue to smoke know how to access quit smoking programmes if they want help to stop. Young people benefit from an informed, coordinated and planned approach

to meeting their needs, which includes successful partnerships with other health and support services.

Young people are being practically prepared and supported for independence according to their needs and future plans. They engage in meaningful activities and rehearse the practical skills needed to meet the challenges they will face as they get older. For example, young people learn to use public transport and navigate their own way to and from family contact. Staff promote the use of free time away from the home as a way of increasing young people's personal responsibility and independence. Young people maintain valued contact with family, friends and other people who are important to them. Arrangements made by staff enable young people to meet with their family and friends at the home or other locations. Contact arrangements and circumstances are very different for each young person and they benefit from the team's detailed knowledge of family circumstances to help them successfully plan and organise contact.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy positive and constructive relationships with staff. They are very well supported to learn and develop the skills they need to be tolerant and understanding of each other and to behave appropriately. Staff display excellent skills when helping young people modify their unacceptable behaviours. This is because of a consistent approach, which is based on communicating clearly with each young person. Young people learn about socially acceptable boundaries that enable everybody to feel safe and comfortable.

Young people feel that their views, wishes and feelings are actively sought and that they significantly influence the running of the home. Great care is taken to ensure young people can equally participate and contribute by staff understanding and incorporating preferred ways of talking and listening. Staff use a range of ways where ideas and issues can be discussed, encouraging young people to participate and influence how support and care are provided. For example, young people's views influence menus, recreational activities, friend and family contact, décor and daily routines. This approach maximises their involvement and promotes an inclusive approach to living in the home.

Young people, irrespective of any learning or communication difficulty, know how to make a complaint. Young people are confident about making a complaint, knowing that they will be listened to and their concerns resolved quickly. Parents and stakeholders are also invited to make their views known to the home's managers to ensure that any concerns can be resolved quickly.

Young people are cared for in line with their individual plans of care, which are comprehensive and unique to each individual. The contribution the home makes to these plans is on-going and of high quality which involves young people and those who are significant to them. Consequently, young people understand what staff are

doing to help them achieve positive change and make progress in their lives.

Young people access a range of purposeful and enjoyable activities both inside and outside of the home. They are actively encouraged to participate in a range of leisure and recreational activities. Staff are continually talking to young people about their leisure time and what they would like to do. This results in individual choices being made that reflect the interests and preferences of each young person. Group activities and outings are also encouraged and facilitated in support of young people's social development and peer relationships. For instance, young people and staff are all going abroad for a summer holiday during the school break.

Staff are very familiar with young people's family backgrounds, identities, medical and behavioural needs which are positively met. Great care is taken to ensure that the mix of needs young people have are matched to a way of working that does not discriminate or exclude anyone. Staff ensure that young people develop a strong sense of personal identity by helping them to reflect on their experiences as they grow older. Staff actively challenge discriminatory language or behaviour and seek to educate young people about issues relating to diversity such as race, culture and gender.

The home is well located in a quiet residential suburb close to many public transport links and facilities. Young people benefit from a comfortable environment, which in parts is very homely. All young people have their own bedrooms, which they can decorate and personalise to their own tastes. Young people's personal space and their right to privacy is respected. Where staff are concerned about health and safety matters that may affect the rest of the house, this is dealt with sensitively and responsibly. There is a continual programme of upgrading and decoration. Young people are encouraged to express their preferences regarding colour schemes and furnishings when communal areas are being improved.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people feel safe and are safe in the home. Managers and the staff team confidently meet their responsibilities to keep young people safe. They make sure that the quality of care that young people experience is consistent and prioritises their well-being. Young people actively benefit from the home's well-established routines and procedures that explicitly recognise the need to protect and safeguard everyone. All staff are very aware of intervention strategies that consistently and successfully help young people address and modify any risk taking behaviours.

Staff use the home's policies and notification procedures to help reduce the risks young people may experience when they are missing from care. Young people know and understand that prompt and early action will be taken to determine their whereabouts and gain their safe return home. Over time, the risks young people have experienced through this kind of behaviour has reduced greatly. Young people

rarely go missing because of the work undertaken by managers and the staff team.

Staff consistently promote and praise positive behaviours. Young people understand that staff take full account of their difficult past experiences and try to help them make positive changes where necessary. Young people are encouraged to act with consideration for others, particularly peers who may be having difficulties with their own behaviour. Young people make considerable progress because staff are experienced at helping to maintain safe boundaries and socially acceptable behaviour. Where young people's behaviours fall below an expected standard, staff engage with them patiently, communicating in a way that matches each young person's age and understanding. All young people have comprehensive plans that include agreed strategies about the management of their behaviour. This arrangement helps guide staff in their practice and supports managers in their assessment of the effectiveness of the measures used.

The staff employed in the home are carefully selected and vetted to ensure that young people are properly looked after and effectively safeguarded. Investigations into allegations or suspicions of harm receive fair, speedy and consistent handling in a manner that provides effective protection for young people. Staff understand and use their training to ensure young people's continued protection is maintained. The home's environment is physically safe and appropriately secure, taking account of the varying needs and circumstances of each young person. Young people's health and safety is fully supported because maintenance and protective procedures are applied consistently by managers and the staff team.

Leadership and management

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

Young people benefit from living in a home that is effectively and efficiently managed. There is strong, visible leadership that promotes high quality care and improving outcomes for all young people. Managers consistently communicate high expectations to staff about sustaining improvements. Staff are managed in a way that encourages them to regularly reflect on their work and to discuss and suggest ways of making the service better. This approach helps stimulate the enthusiasm of staff and channel their efforts effectively for the benefit of young people.

The provider meets the aims and objectives in the Statement of Purpose although a copy has not been provided to Her Majesty's Chief Inspector. Young people, their families, staff and social workers are clear about what services and facilities are available and how the home provides for the needs of each young person. Staff spend time with young people going through the children's guide to ensure they fully understand what they can expect from staff and what staff should expect from them. The Registered Manager is actively involved in promoting and maintaining good relationships with neighbours to minimise and reduce the potential for any complaints.

The Registered Manager can readily demonstrate the service's capacity for

continuing improvement, which is based on its record of previous successes and performance. Young people's placement stability and continued good progress is frequently tracked and evaluated to ensure improving outcomes can be achieved. The home's management team have a robust range of systems in place to ensure on-going monitoring occurs and that these systems inform improvement and development. Although the quality of care is outstanding, this does not stop the team from exploring ways to achieve further improvements. Managers clearly understand the strengths and potential shortfalls of the service and have a challenging development plan in place. One requirement and one recommendation were made at the last inspection. Both have been addressed by the Registered Manager through improvements in the monitoring and reporting systems used to evaluate the service.

A sufficient number of appropriately trained, effectively supervised and supported staff work in the home. Staff receive informed management support and guidance enabling them to fulfil their roles and provide a high quality service to young people. Staff are enthusiastic and want young people to succeed and make positive progress. The team regularly receives feedback about their performance in staff meetings highlighting successful practices and areas for improvement. For instance, the quality of staff handovers has improved following the recognition that information sharing was sometimes not good enough. Roles and responsibilities are regularly discussed that relate to key practice areas, ensuring young people continue to receive services that are unique to their needs.

The registered provider regularly monitors all aspects of the living environment and functions of the home including consultation with young people. Young people's records, both electronic and written are clear, up to date and stored securely which helps to contribute to the understanding of each young person's life. Young people know how to access their care files with some choosing to do this with support from staff. The Registered Manager notifies the appropriate authorities of all significant events that relate to the protection of young people, confirming the actions taken to promote everyone's safety and well-being.

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* (March 2011) and the evaluation schedule for children's homes.