

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Ann-Marie Born
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is owned by a private organisation. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to a maximum of nine 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**.

Young people feel safe and are protected by consistent, high quality practice to safeguard them. There is a good reduction in the majority of risk-taking behaviours which is recognisable to all involved parties. A specialist police officer said, 'I would say (name) is by far the most proactive children's home in my area and affords the most safeguarding to the most vulnerable kids we have.'

Young people make good progress from their starting points in all aspects of their lives. Excellent assessments comprehensively inform plans, including assessing the impact of past experiences on presenting behaviour. Young people consistently express views of how well they feel cared for. They benefit from tailored, individual care which fully incorporates their holistic needs. A parent commented, 'I think it's really helped him. Can talk to him now and he's safe there because he talks to them as well. I haven't got any complaints because it is brilliant there.'

The manager and staff team consistently demonstrate positive, warm relationships between themselves, as well as towards young people, and are excellent role models. Young people are encouraged to make their own choices and increase their own responsibility for their futures. Young people are consulted daily about events in the home. They are valued, respected and understood as individuals.

The innovative and proactive management team have a thorough understanding of the strengths and areas for development within the home. They continually strive to improve the individual care and outcomes for young people. However, there are some areas of development to further improve the good practice. These relate to

ensuring young people record their views following the imposition of any sanctions or use of restraint and that there are more consistent opportunities for young people to develop skills for independence.

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 where any sanctions, disciplinary methods or restraint are used, young people are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records kept by the home (NMS 3.18)
- ensure that the home contributes to each young person's pathway plan and works collaboratively with the young person's social worker in implementing the plan. (NMS 12.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people receive full support to foster an understanding and knowledge of their family and heritage. This enables them to develop and maintain pride in their cultural background and empathy for others. Young people make good progress in forming a positive self-view and building emotional resilience. Staff clearly value and respect the young people and work hard to form positive attachments and trusting relationships. Through these, young people develop confidence in their abilities and, where appropriate, rebuild relationships with their family members and in their communities.

The majority of young people build strong, sustainable attachments with staff members. As a result, young people's feelings of self-worth, self-esteem and confidence in their abilities to form relationships are enhanced. Not all young people recognise the strength of these attachments while they are resident, but demonstrate the impact the home has had on their lives by contacting the home after they have left. A staff member said, 'We've had situations where people have left and then they have phoned back and said thank you. That's really meant a lot. They would not take it on board at the time but they do take it on and it's helped.'

Young people demonstrate increasing awareness of how to live a healthy life; they eat healthily and take regular daily exercise, such as playing football. Unhealthy lifestyle choices are discouraged. Individual key work sessions support young people to understand the impact of making harmful choices. Young people benefit from a choice of participatory physical activities in the home. In addition, they are encouraged to take part in a range of inclusive activities and trips, such as visits to aquariums and days out to visit cities and castles. Choices and interests locally are

regularly offered to encourage young people to take more opportunities on offer and widen their horizons. The positive benefits this holistic approach provides are evident to young people and family members. A parent commented, 'His appearance is good.'

The staff team work closely with the company's school team and other education providers to promote the benefits and structure of daily education. As a result some young people's attendance in class improves significantly from their starting points; enabling them to gain on lost time and maximise learning opportunities. A social worker stated, 'He has changed a lot since he has been there. He is going to school regularly.' Young people make satisfactory progress in their educational achievements.

Young people benefit from structured and agreed contact arrangements with family and significant people. Where appropriate, young people enjoy increased visits to their families or, at their request, changes in arrangements are made. Therefore, young people have opportunities to build stronger relationships with their families to gain support now and in their independent living in the future. This effectively maintains cultural links and promotes young people's sense of identity and belonging. A social worker said, 'They have taken on board our views around the care plan and contact with family. They work very well with the family.'

There is evidence that some young people are being effectively prepared for independence through the home's 'Pathway Plan' process. This enables young people to take pride in their growing self-care skills and build self-esteem. However, this programme is not being consistently applied with all young people; therefore opportunities for them to recognise developmental progress are being missed.

Quality of care

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

The strong, enthusiastic staff team have consistently high aspirations for the young people in their care. They work strenuously to engage with young people and develop positive, constructive relationships. They provide opportunities for young people to share their wishes and feelings. Young people enjoy warm, productive relationships with staff and each other, even if they are not always in agreement with the boundaries. This effectively promotes self-esteem and feelings of self-worth and belonging. A young person stated that he 'felt really welcomed here' as the staff were 'a really nice group of people'.

Practice is exceptionally child-centred and personalised. The experienced and nurturing manager and staff team analyse each young person's needs and continually review the effectiveness of strategies. Outstanding action plans are developed and reviewed together with young people. The excellent support provided by key workers encourages young people to work through difficulties and address the key areas in their plans. Young people are consulted, contribute fully to their plans and know what they are working towards. A social worker commented, 'He has

been 'key worked' in a way that actually helps him to make sense of things.'

Young people's wellbeing and individual achievements are at the centre of all practice, irrespective of the challenges they present. As a result, young people work towards achievable goals and their interests are fostered and built upon. This includes sourcing specific activities to meet individual wishes, for example, entering cooking competitions or joining roller blading or American football clubs. These provide young people with opportunities for new life experiences through which they gain confidence in their abilities and build friendships while improving self-esteem. A social worker said, 'He has developed the initiative for his interests since he has been there.'

Excellent individual health plans ensure that young people's holistic health needs are comprehensively assessed. As a result, identified concerns, including those requiring specialist input from therapists to meet emotional and psychological needs, are met.

Innovative staff provide young people with every opportunity to achieve their educational potential. Excellent communication is maintained with education establishments and staff use the well-equipped computer room to encourage young people to access further learning opportunities, for example, accessing the internet to plan a day out, including travel time and the cost of entry.

Young people receive positive recognition for any achievements as these are widely communicated and celebrated. A parent said, 'Staff talk to me, they ring and tell me,' and a social worker commented, 'The communication has been excellent.'

Needs relating to young people's cultural, religious and personal identities are comprehensively identified in care planning and actively addressed in day-to-day living. The proactive staff team provide young people with the opportunity to engage positively with members of their community, for example, by attending Diwali celebrations. This successfully enhances young people's sense of belonging and trust in staff who care for them.

Young people enjoy living in a comfortable, well maintained home which is within walking distance of a range of social and leisure amenities. Young people each have their own rooms which they personalise to their own taste. In addition, they have use of community rooms allowing space for shared activities as well as personal time. Young people take evident pride in their home and the care they receive. A specialist police officer commented, 'One of the things I've seen in the house was when one of the lads said something to a member of staff and the other lads pulled him up on it. There was pride among young people that 'this is our home and you don't talk to people like that'.'

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people, their parents and professionals report that young people feel safe and

are supported to keep safe. Young people know staff care about them and say they talk to them about risks and making safe choices. Staff are fully aware that there are times when young people seek to take risks; they approach this by talking through potential consequences to provide young people with a sense of their own responsibility and choices. As a result the majority of young people's risk-taking behaviours reduce and they feel cared for and protected. A parent commented, 'He is safe there and they've helped him see things differently.' Staff are proactive in safeguarding young people, understand their responsibilities and act in accordance with local authority procedures where required. This ensures young people are protected in line with legislation.

Staff take a proactive approach to putting boundaries in place in the community, as any good parent would. Young people's particular vulnerabilities are understood and staff employ vigilance and strategies in line with excellent risk assessments. Regular training ensures staff keep up-to-date with safeguarding and protecting young people. Good multi-agency working and protocols ensure a holistic approach to safeguarding. This ensures all agencies are vigilant and work to current plans to offer protection for young people.

The experienced, consistent staff team develop strong relationships with young people. They actively encourage positive behaviour through the use of key work sessions, incentives and a reward system. The manager stated, 'The quality of the relationships is what builds the behaviour, not sanctions and control.' As a result, the need for restraints reduce as young people settle. Young people learn negotiation skills and positive and appropriate ways to manage anger and frustration. Any sanction imposed is proportionate and monitored by the manager to ensure efficacy. Young people say they are fairly treated. However, not all young people are recording their views following the imposition of a sanction or any episode of restraint. Consequently further opportunities for them to learn from their behaviour are being missed.

There has been an increased number of episodes of young people who are recent admissions to the home going missing. Comprehensive missing from home protocols are enhanced by strong, partnership working with the police to address this issue and reduce the number of incidents. Young people confirm that staff actively address why they go missing. One young person said, 'I don't always come home on time and then they come looking for me, tell the police I'm not around and talk to me for about an hour when I come home.' In addition, young people are invited to see appropriate independent practitioners after any such episode. Young people are safeguarded by these measures.

Once young people have fully engaged with the home and the care they receive there is an improvement in their level of absence. A social worker commented, 'He used to abscond a lot but his number of absconsions has reduced dramatically since he has been there.'

Young people are well informed of their rights and the range of independent people and organisations available for them to consult or complain to. An independent

advocate regularly meets with young people to discuss their care and experiences. As a result, young people develop an awareness of the choices open to them and their sense of security and well-being is enhanced.

Young people are further safeguarded by robust recruitment practices which protect them from being cared for by people who may pose a risk to them. In addition, young people's physical safety is assured by good health and safety procedures. Established systems are in place for the routine checking and servicing of all fire equipment and other appliances.

Leadership and management

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

This home is diligently managed with excellent arrangements for monitoring the quality of care. The efficient and nurturing manager imbues the experienced, capable deputy managers and staff team with the confidence in which to implement their delegated responsibilities. Staff are very well supported, supervised and involved in making decisions. They state that development and training opportunities are 'really good' and this helps progress their careers. The manager and staff team are well qualified to meet the needs of young people. High staffing levels ensure that young people are always cared for by somebody they know. Staff report that trust in each other and morale in the home is very high. A member of staff stated, 'The manager is fantastic at why we are here and will always see the other side of the story. The manager is 'Mr Morale' in the place.'

The management team is strong. It recognises and utilises the enthusiasm, strengths and transferrable skills of the staff team to support young people, for example, matching a key worker and a young person with similar interests in music and comedy. Consistently high expectations are relayed to staff through regular meetings, supervision and appraisal. This improves staff practice and focuses their attention on meeting the needs of young people and helping them develop. Young people are cared for by a staff team who are well equipped to meet their needs. The progress young people make is evident. A parent said, 'He has made a lot of progress that he wouldn't have made if he hadn't been there. You can talk to him now like you wouldn't have been able to years ago. And he listens.'

The home is operating in line with a comprehensive Statement of Purpose, which is complemented by an inclusive children's guide. These documents thoroughly outline the aims and objectives of the service ensuring that the principles are understood by all interested parties, including young people.

Robust independent monitoring visits routinely influence improvements to the service and ascertain young people's views on their care and experiences. The manager communicates and notifies agencies, including Ofsted, of significant information. Consequently young people are protected by multi-agency decision making. Records are securely kept, meticulously maintained and any identified shortfalls are promptly addressed. This ensures high standards are maintained as well as contributing to

young people's explicit sense of belonging and an understanding of their lives.

The manager maintains a sound overview of key documents, policies and procedures in order to ensure practice is current, relevant to young people's needs and accountable. The views of young people, parents and professionals are routinely captured to continuously improve day-to-day care and promote achievement. An excellent development plan comprehensively outlines the aims and objectives for the year. No requirements or recommendations were made at the last inspection and the quality of care remains consistently high.

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.