

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Dennis Bradley
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The children's home is provided by a charitable organisation and cares for up to eight young people aged 10 to 17 years old. It is registered to care for young people with 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**.

Overall this home provides a good quality of care and staff work hard to promote improved outcomes for the young people. Staff are very effective at building positive relationships with young people whose behaviour, at times, can be very challenging. Of the three professionals who completed a survey, one thinks the services provided by the home are good and two said they are excellent. All three said they would recommend the home to other social workers and independent reviewing officers.

Staff encourage young people to discuss their care needs, and the manager is keen to encourage and promote their involvement in the care planning process. Very good staffing levels enable staff to provide support that is tailored to meet the individual needs of the young people. The young people live in a comfortable home that provides an attractive and welcoming environment.

Young people receive good support and encouragement from staff to attend and engage positively in their education. They also have good opportunities to practice and develop life skills they will need as an adult. Overall young people make good progress in their placements.

Young people benefit from being cared for by a team of staff who work hard to keep them safe and promote their welfare. Professionals confirmed that staff understand how to protect young people and safeguard their welfare. Most of the young people said they feel safe at the home all of the time, although some made comments about when bullying occurs. All of the young people said they can talk to staff if they have any worries or concerns.

The home is effectively led and the manager and staff are committed to improving outcomes for the young people. The three professionals who completed a survey all confirmed improving outcomes for children is a clear priority for staff. One social worker said: 'Staff are exceptionally committed to achieving the best outcomes for young people.' The home's effective systems for monitoring the care and welfare of the young people ensure good standards are maintained.

Three recommendations have been made as a result of this inspection. These relate to staff training and consulting young people, parents and placing authorities about the monitoring of the home.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure staff are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of the young people they care for, in particular how to support young people to develop a knowledge and understanding of their background (NMS 2 and NMS 18.1)
- ensure staff are trained to recognise and deal with any indications or incidents of bullying (NMS 3.12)
- ensure that reports completed under Regulation 34 clearly refer to how the views of young people, their families and placing authorities about the operation of the home, are taken into account. (NMS 21.1 and Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph 2.27)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people benefit from the good levels of individual care, support and guidance they receive and overall make good progress while living at the home. Young people said the care and support they receive from staff are good. The social worker for one young person said they have made 'fantastic' progress since moving into the home. Staff support young people, where appropriate, to maintain regular contact with their family and to develop suitable friendships. This enables young people to build and maintain links with those who are important to them. Professionals confirmed that staff support young people to gain an understanding of their life history and background so that they develop a sense of identity. However, some staff have not received specific training in how to provide this support to young people.

Staff provide good support to young people in relation to their health. Young people have good access to advice and information about a range of health matters, such as the dangers of smoking, drugs and alcohol. The good links staff have with a range of

health promotion agencies enable young people to access professional support to lead a healthy lifestyle. However, some young people choose not to take the advice and continue to put their health at risk by, for example, smoking. Young people also receive good support to stop engaging in other risk-taking behaviours, such as going missing, and have made progress in this regard.

Young people receive good support to attend school and complete their education. All of the young people have made positive progress and have regular attendance. Staff have regular contact with the schools and, where appropriate, attend parent and review meetings. This helps young people to understand that staff value their education and see it as an important part of their development. Professionals confirmed that young people's learning is improved by the care they receive from staff.

Young people have good opportunities to develop confidence in a range of practical skills that prepare them for leaving care. For example, they learn how to prepare meals and carry out routine household tasks in the home. They also receive support to engage in a good range of positive activities such as attending camping, fishing and horse riding.

Young people have good opportunities to participate in decisions about their care and plans for their future. They also have opportunities to have their say in how the home is run.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from positive and warm relationships with staff. Professionals confirmed that young people speak well of the staff. Young people receive care and support from a consistent and experienced staff team who promote a positive atmosphere in the home. Staff value the views and wishes of the young people and actively consult them about their care and the running of the home. Young people are aware of how to make a complaint and confirmed they can talk to staff if they have any worries or concerns. Records demonstrate that young people's concerns are taken seriously and addressed promptly and appropriately.

Staff are committed to improving young people's life chances by supporting and promoting their education. They actively address any barriers to young people's education and work hard to develop good working relationships with schools and education advisors. This helps ensure any concerns or issues are dealt with quickly and has positive results for the young people. All young people currently attend school regularly and are making progress. Education is seen as an important part of young people's life, and school attendance is a daily routine of the home. Staff make sure young people's achievements are celebrated which helps build their self-esteem and confidence.

Staff ensure the diverse needs of the young people are clearly recorded in their

individual placement plans. They encourage young people to play an active role in the development and review of their plans. Young people said they know about their placement plans.

Staff are very good at advocating on behalf of young people. They are good at working in partnership with social workers and other professionals, such as those in health and education, to ensure young people's needs are addressed. Professionals confirmed they are asked for their views about the services the home provides and how these may be improved. Where appropriate, staff also work closely and constructively with parents. This helps to ensure continuity of care as well as good outcomes for the young people.

Young people's good health is actively encouraged by staff and health promotion agencies. The management team is good at ensuring that staff have the relevant skills and knowledge to meet the diverse health needs of the young people. Young people are provided with a healthy diet and are supported to help prepare and make meals in the home's kitchen.

Staff are good at supporting and encouraging young people to develop independence skills in preparation for them leaving care. Young people are also encouraged to participate in sports and leisure activities as well as choosing different hobbies and interests. Staff make sure young people's achievements are praised and rewarded which helps to develop their self-esteem and confidence.

Staff are good at working constructively with the young people to enable them to develop socially acceptable behaviour. Overall there has been a reduction in the incidents of negative behaviour displayed by the young people.

The home is decorated and furnished to a good standard. Staff try hard to ensure the home is well cared for so that it continues to be comfortable and homely.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are looked after by competent staff who understand the need to keep them safe. Professionals either agreed or strongly agreed that staff understand how to protect young people and safeguard their welfare. Staff take prompt and appropriate action when young people place themselves at risk. They ensure the home's safeguarding procedures and risk assessments are implemented effectively. This helps to, for example, minimise the risks of young people going missing or failing to return to the home at the agreed time. The frequency young people go missing has reduced significantly during their time at the home.

Young people say there have been bullying incidents which they are not happy about. Staff do actively address bullying behaviour, although this is not always evident to the young people. Anti-bullying is strongly promoted and staff use young people's meetings and individual discussions with young people to raise their

awareness of this behaviour and its impact. Some staff have not received training in the skills they need to intervene and reduce bullying behaviours by young people in their care.

Staff follow comprehensive risk assessments to help them manage the behaviours displayed by young people. Positive behaviour is actively promoted by staff and there is an emphasis on using praise and reward. Staff agree individual targets and rewards with young people. When staff use sanctions these are relevant and reasonable. Staff only use physical restraint on young people as a last resort and there have been no such incidents since the last inspection of the home.

The provider adopts a robust procedure to employ new staff and follows safer recruitment practices. This ensures, as far as possible, that young people who come to live at the home are looked after by suitable people. Good health and safety procedures enable staff to maintain a safe and secure home environment for young people to live comfortably.

Leadership and management

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

The manager provides good leadership and effective management of the home. She ensures the home is run in line with its Statement of Purpose and staff understand their roles and responsibilities. Staff say they have good support from the management team in relation to their work and professional development. This helps them provide good outcomes for the young people.

There are good systems in place for monitoring and controlling how the home is run in order to improve the quality of care provided. The management team ensures these are implemented, including constantly monitoring the welfare of the young people living at the home. There are appropriate arrangements in place for consulting young people, parents and professionals about the running of the home. The manager completes a written report regarding the outcome of her monitoring of the service. However, the report does not refer to the outcomes of consultation with young people and others and how this has been taken into account in developing the service.

Appropriate action has been taken to address the three recommendations made at the last inspection of the home. The person carrying out the visits under Regulation 33 speaks in private with the parents or relatives of young people living at the home. This helps ensure they are regularly involved in contributing to monitoring the operation of the home. Action has also been taken to obtain records of statutory reviews of young people living at the home. This means, for example, that individuals who are specifically accountable for carrying out tasks agreed at the review are clearly identified. There have been no incidents where staff have used physical restraint on young people since the last inspection. However, the manager has provided staff with additional guidance regarding what records must be kept of any such incidents. Keeping suitable records of these incidents enables effective

monitoring of them to make sure appropriate action has been taken.

Young people benefit from being looked after by a consistent and very caring team of staff who endeavour to meet their individual and diverse needs. All but one of the staff have a relevant qualification which helps them meet the needs of the young people they care for. Staffing levels are very good and enable staff to spend time meeting the individual needs of the young people.

Regular staff meetings and the handover arrangements between shifts help ensure there is effective communication within the staff team. This helps staff to keep up to date with any changes to young people's needs or circumstances.

The management team ensures the appropriate authorities are notified of any significant events relating to the protection of the young people. The home keeps detailed records about the care and welfare of young people. Staff support young people to engage in and contribute to their case records. The records are up to date and stored securely.

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.