

Inspection report for children's home

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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 of either gender 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**.

The home provides a warm, supportive environment in which young people can grow and feel safe. There are some good examples of personalised, individual care being delivered to young people who have experienced some difficult emotional times and family trauma. The nurturing environment allows young people to mature and to develop socially acceptable behaviour. Young people have developed from their starting points, especially with regard to their emotional well-being and relationships with family members. Formal education is given a very high priority. Young people are supported to understand the importance of a good education, to attend regularly and to achieve their maximum potential. The relationship between young people and staff was observed to be very friendly, warm and positive. Young people spoke fondly of staff. One young person went so far as to say, 'staff here are like my family they help me a lot when I'm struggling.'

Feedback from staff, responsible social workers and other professionals involved with the home is very positive. The home is comfortable and well maintained throughout. The atmosphere created by the staff and young people is informal, friendly and very cheerful. Staff have a genuine affection for the young people and are fully committed to ensuring they achieve their maximum potential. One young person's social worker said, 'staff have worked hard to build positive relationships with the young people they care for.' Young people know that staff, genuinely care about them.

Staff work hard to ensure that all young people are kept safe and free from harm. Restraint or holding of young people does not take place very often. However, there are some shortfalls with regard to the written records of any restraints used. This

means that essential information may not be retained on the young person's file. Most young people living at the home do not run away or go missing. However, when this does happen staff work hard to try and locate the young person concerned. When the young person returns they are responded to appropriately. However, staff do not routinely record the whereabouts the young people are returning from. This means that the locations young people are running away to are not recorded and emerging patterns are not recorded.

The home is well managed and the staff team is committed to meeting the diverse needs of the young people. The home operates a thorough recruitment process that helps to ensure young people are looked after by suitable people. Young people are supported to learn activities for daily living and to develop their independence skills.

Independent visits help to ensure the home is run properly. The independent visitor speaks in confidence with young people, staff and responsible social workers. However, they do not speak in confidence with family members, to ensure that their opinions are borne in mind.

The needs of young people are regularly monitored and reviewed. This helps staff to identify changing needs and to respond appropriately. There are some shortfalls in recording with regards to the notes of formal statutory reviews are not being retained on each young person's file; some details of restraints and when young people go missing are not kept. This means that those responsible for meeting the changing needs of the young person may not be held accountable.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- review the home's written restraint records to ensure they comply fully with national minimum standards (NMS 3.16)
- review the missing from home records to ensure the whereabouts of a young person returning from being missing are fully recorded (NMS 5.10)
- ensure that the results of all statutory reviews are retained on the young person's file (NMS 25.8)
- ensure that, during every visit, the person carrying out the visits under Regulation 33 speaks in private with the parents or relatives of young people living at the home. NMS 21.7)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people enjoy very good health and they attend all primary health care appointments. Staff, ensure that young people access all the services they need to promote both their physical and emotional well-being. Where appropriate this can also include adolescent mental health services. One young person's independent reviewing officer said, 'the home, seem to understand his needs very well, I have no concerns about his well-being.' Young people who participate in behaviours, such as smoking, are encouraged and supported to change their behaviour. Staff remain resolute in their attempts to educate young people about the health risks of smoking and other risk-taking behaviours. Young people enjoy a good, healthy and nutritious diet. One young person said, 'there's a member of staff here who used to be a chef. The food's always great here but better when he's on duty. We join in and help if we want to, it helps us to learn how to cook for ourselves.'

Young people are actively supported and encouraged to have good attendance at school. Staff offer on-going advice to young people about the importance of a good education and in achieving their maximum potential. Success and achievements in education are celebrated to offer further encouragement. One staff member said, 'we have a couple of young people who look forward to going to school but we have others who are more reluctant. We just persevere and try to iron out any problems quickly before they become too big.' In addition, one young person said, 'I'm going to college at the minute but in the long-term I want to be a train driver I've looked at the qualifications you need so I know what I have to work at.' Young people are fully supported to achieve their maximum potential.

The young people at the home have lived together for some time. They do have occasional arguments but generally they get on well with each other. Young people are encouraged to get involved in activities for daily living and household tasks. This helps them to learn new skills and to be more independent.

Staff enable young people to make sense of their background and to understand why they have to live in the home. Where appropriate, family contact is encouraged and staff, go out of their way to facilitate and support it. Since coming to live at the home some young people have developed strong, positive links with their families. One young person's social worker said, 'the home has provided my young person with stability, something I wouldn't have thought possible a few years ago.'

Quality of care

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

The home provides a very warm, supportive and nurturing environment in which young people can develop both physically and emotionally. Staff, have a friendly and informal manner with young people, although they are also able to demonstrate a firm manner when necessary. Assessments of the individual needs of young people have been carried out by placing authorities prior to young people moving into the home. The home has developed care plans for meeting the specific and individual needs of young people. Staff and young people know what a placement at the home is meant to achieve. One young person's independent reviewing officer said, 'this is a

very nurturing environment for my young person and he's thriving.' Regular monitoring and review of the care provided to young people takes place through key worker meetings and informal discussions with young people themselves. This enables staff to evaluate the care they provide. One young person's social worker said, 'I'm always kept informed about what's happening. The level of communication is very good.' However, written records of all statutory reviews undertaken are not available within the home. The changing needs of young people are met, although those who are specifically accountable for carrying out agreed tasks are not identified.

Young people's files are detailed and well ordered. Written information retained within the home provides an extensive record of each young person's life there, as well as the help and support carried out by staff. Young people are involved in the running of the home through key worker meetings and young people's meetings. Staff, also have informal discussions with young people during activities or trips away. This enables young people to discuss how the home is run, to help identify any improvements that can be made or to express their dissatisfaction with anything if they are unhappy. Young people know that their opinions are listened to. The home has a culture of promoting each young person's life experiences and in ensuring they are able to participate in a wide range of activities. This helps young people to develop their confidence and self-esteem.

The home has a detailed admissions process for young people. All admissions to the home are carefully planned and take place at the young person's pace. This process helps to overcome any anxieties the young person may have and to ensure the home can meet their needs. Members of staff are committed to ensuring each young person enjoys a positive experience while living at the home and is able to develop both physically and emotionally. One young person's independent reviewing officer said, 'the home should have every reason to be pleased. My young person can be very demanding and they go above and beyond what is necessary to provide good care.'

Young people enjoy living in a residential area close to the city centre. Each young person has their own bedroom and they are encouraged to make them as comfortable and personal as possible, as well as clean and tidy. Young people have access to a computer and computer gaming equipment. There is a television in the lounge where young people can relax. The home also has a dining area where members of staff and young people can socialise and enjoy a meal together. The home provides a comfortable environment for young people to enjoy.

Young people are encouraged to enjoy a healthy lifestyle. Individual dietary needs are catered for and members of staff have undergone training in safe food hygiene. Each young person has written consent forms in place in order for members of staff to administer medication or first aid where this is necessary. Members of staff have also had first aid training which includes, the safe handling and administration of medication. The welfare of young people is, therefore, safeguarded.

Relationships between members of staff and young people were observed to be very

caring, friendly and warm. Members of staff actively strive to provide an environment in which young people are nurtured. Where they can be happy and flourish. Young people spoken to said, 'this is an excellent place to live' and 'I've learned a lot from staff, I was quite a tricky child when I first came here but staff have supported me and pushed me forward.' One young person's social worker said, 'I wouldn't be confident another setting could manage my young person as well as this home does.'

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are safeguarded and they said they felt safe and looked after. There have been several occasions since the last inspection when a young person has been missing from the home. The whereabouts of the young people that have returned from being missing have not been recorded in the missing from home log. This means that staff are unable to determine if the young person is running away to specific locations or to specific people. One young person's social worker said, 'staff have worked really hard to ensure the safety of all the young people. I have complete trust in them to do the right thing. I'm comfortable with their decision-making'. Staff deal with any incidents of alleged bullying quickly and efficiently. Bullying is not tolerated at the home. The manager and all members of staff are trained in safeguarding and receive regular refresher training to keep their skills and knowledge up to date. This helps to ensure they are both confident and competent in dealing with any safeguarding issues should these arise.

Staff, promote a culture of positive behaviour within the home and young people are supported to take responsibility for their actions. Several initiatives are used to help young people modify their behaviour. Initiatives include both sanctions and restorative techniques. Young people are encouraged to reflect on their behaviour, its consequences and the effect it has on others. One young person's independent reviewing officer said, 'my young person can exhibit extreme challenging behaviour and be very demanding, but they manage him appropriately.' Restraint or holding young people is an infrequent occurrence and is used as an absolute last resort to protect the young person from harming themselves or others. Written records of all restraints used are retained in a book used specifically for that purpose. However, the restraints log does not fully comply with national minimum standards. Essential information may not be recorded and a true record of all restraints is not maintained.

The home's manager carries out regular checks of the home's fire systems, smoke detectors and emergency lighting. Young people take part in fire drills and the time at which fire drills take place are fully recorded. Young people live in a safe environment because the home has a thorough and systematic approach to risk management. Risk assessments are clear, focused and regularly reviewed. Regular checks of gas installations and electrical equipment also take place.

Young people benefit from an energetic and caring staff team. There have been several new appointments since the last inspection. The home has a clear recruitment policy. This helps to ensure that young people are looked after by

suitable people and are fully protected from potential abuse. Visitors to the home are asked to identify themselves on arrival and to sign the visitors book.

Leadership and management

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

The home's manager provides effective and competent leadership. Staff members are motivated and are encouraged to create new opportunities for the young people living at the home. The home meets the aims and objectives set out in its Statement of Purpose and provides clear information about the skills, qualifications and experience of the staff team.

The home's manager and senior staff provide daily support to the staff team. Formal staff supervision takes place at regular intervals and is supplemented by daily discussions about the running of the home, care practices and the young people. This helps staff members to develop their skills, feel fully supported in their work and ensures young people receive consistent care from a well-supported staff team. Members of staff understand each young person's individual strengths and needs. Working practices are consistent in enabling young people to develop both physically and emotionally, in increasing their self-esteem and in helping them to achieve their potential. Young people are supported to learn new skills and to participate in how the home is run.

Young people live in a home that is effectively managed. The home's manager provides effective management and has systems in place to ensure that the quality of care is regularly monitored. Problem areas which may be identified are quickly highlighted and swift action is taken. One young person's independent reviewing officer said, 'they're never problem focussed here. They always concentrate on the positive aspects of my young person's care.' The manager has written a development plan for the home. The manager and staff know what the strengths and weaknesses of the home are and what improvements they wish to make.

Regulation 33 visits take place and Ofsted is provided with written reports in a timely manner. The reports are informative and give an overview of how the home is performing between inspection visits. There is consultation with young people, staff and professionals involved in the young person's care. However, discussions do not take place between the independent visitor, the relatives or family members of young people. This means that their views about how the home is run or how the young people are looked after do not take place. Their opinions and suggestions for improvement do not currently form part of this process.

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.