

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Elaine Clare
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is run by the local authority and provides care and accommodation for up to six boys or girls. The home is registered to care for young people with emotional or 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**.

Young people enjoy positive relationships with staff which are built upon honesty and trust. This means they are beginning to talk about any concerns or issues and receive the right support and guidance. Young people's needs are met well through comprehensive, personalised care planning. This means young people make steady progress across all aspects of the welfare and development. Social workers are pleased with the progress young people have made so far.

Staff have a secure understanding of the home's safeguarding and missing from care procedures. Consequently, they are able to take swift action to support young people and protect them from harm. Staff are aware of young people's vulnerabilities and work effectively in partnership with the local authority to help keep them safe.

The home is led by a committed Registered Manager who is aware of the home's strengths and some areas for improvement. Staff say they are well supported and have a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities.

Monitoring of the home is appropriate and assists the leadership team in driving forward improvements. There is an issue pertaining to the consistency of entries in records, particularly around incidents and a recommendation has been made.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure information about young people is recorded clearly and in a way that will be helpful to them now and in the future in particular incident records (NMS 22.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **adequate**.

Young people are making steady progress towards improving their opportunities and the quality of their lives. They are starting to develop greater confidence, improved self-esteem and positive attachments with staff. They are becoming more settled and emotionally secure. Young people make a positive contribution to the home through one-to-one discussions with staff. They undertake regular key-working sessions with staff members.

Young people enjoy a range of healthy meals and snacks. They make healthy choices with regards to their diet, but still prefer to sit on the sofa to eat their meals rather around the table with staff. Young people are engaging with health care professionals who visit the home, which means they are able to get the right help and support when they need it.

Detailed systems are in place to support young people's physical, emotional and psychological health and well-being. Young people are involved with a wide range of professionals to help them overcome their anxieties and meet their emotional needs. Arrangements for the administration of medication are appropriate and safe.

All young people have a school placement and some have secured a higher education placement at a training centre. The Registered Manager meets with the training centre and communication is good and much improved since the last inspection. As a result young people's bursaries which had been paid direct into the young people's account is now given to the home. This ensures that young people are kept safe and that their money can be supervised. Attendance in education is variable ranging from adequate to excellent. The outcome of this is that young people develop a positive sense of the importance of education and there are improvements in young people's life chances.

Young people benefit from appropriate well-planned contact with their family. Staff work really hard to ensure that young people find seeing their families to be a safe, positive and enjoyable experience. Staff actively encourage and support young people to re-establish contact with their family. They work effectively with young people, families, social workers and support services to make sure that contact is a rewarding experience that promotes young people's relationships.

Young people have opportunity to take part in a range of leisure activities. Such participation encourages young people to engage in physical exercise, widens their

skills and horizons and provides opportunities for them to spend time outside of the home taking part in the local community. However, there is evidence to show that young people are making inappropriate peer friendships outside of the home and this has resulted in them taking significant risks to their health and welfare.

The home has worked well with those young people whose behaviour is unsafe and places them at risk of harm. They are showing a reduction in their risk-taking activities. A multidisciplinary team has worked together to significantly reduce the number of young people who go missing. Since the last inspection there has only been one occasion where a young person was absent from the home.

Quality of care

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

Young people live in a warm, supportive environment. Staff provide them with adequate standards of care, structure and routine. Staff always see young people in a positive and realistic light. Young people say they enjoy spending time talking to and interacting with staff.

Staff have high aspirations for them and comment upon the progress they have made since residing at the home. Social workers are pleased with the levels of support offered to young people. They say staff are committed to helping young people to come to terms with the things that are happening around them and move forward.

Young people are valued and respected as individuals. This is because staff use good communication and interpersonal skills to develop positive relationships with them. Staff ensure young people are always fully informed as to why they may not be able to agree to inappropriate requests such as returning home. This means young people are informed of and contribute to the decision making process. Young people are aware of their rights and know how to make a complaint should they have any concerns about the service or their care.

Staff have a detailed knowledge of the young people they work with. They place the well-being of individual young people at the centre of their practice. Young people's placement plans are comprehensive and provide a clear picture of all their personal needs and support they require. Young people's plans are effectively put into practice. This ensures young people's specific needs are met on a day-to-day basis and they are able to make steady progress.

Young people's health needs are identified and this helps to promote their good health. Young people are registered with the doctor, dentist and optician and other specialist services as required. Health care plans are set out in a meaningful way and identify most of their health care needs. Staff have a good understanding of young people's specific health needs and relevant training in health and social issues is booked for all staff for the next few months.

Young people enjoy the opportunities to engage in a range of activities with staff. They enjoy challenging staff on games consoles, going to parks and local places of interest. Young people are provided with a choice of activities each day and make their own decisions about where to go from the options provided to them. This enables young people to have an appropriate level of control over their lives and it also enhances their decision making skills.

Young people live in a warm, welcoming, homely environment that meets their needs. Some improvements to the home have been made such as removing locks from the kitchen cupboards. This adds to the welcoming feel. Young people are able to personalise their bedrooms and choose their own colour schemes which reflects their individual needs and tastes. The home is decorated and maintained to a good standard.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are safeguarded because of the staff's understanding of the home's safeguarding and child protection procedures. The procedures have been discussed within team meetings to ensure that staff are fully aware of their responsibilities to keep young people safe. Staff are clear on the action to take should they have any concerns about a young person. They are committed to preserving the confidentiality, dignity and privacy of young people. Positive relationships with social workers and other professionals mean staff are fully aware of any issues which may impact upon young people's safety or well-being. This means they are able to take appropriate action to support each young person. Effective systems are in place should an allegation be made against a member of staff. This ensures the appropriate persons are notified and staff are supported through the process.

Missing from care was previously a significant issue but since the last inspection improvements have been made. Detailed plans are in place for reporting them to the police and other agencies to ensure they return home quickly and safely. Detailed risk assessments are in place which identify young people's individual needs and strategies to support and protect them. There remains a concern however that when young people leave the home there are occasions when they engage in inappropriate behaviour when with peers in the community. They are not always keeping themselves safe. Young people are starting to recognise the seriousness of their poor behaviour and its impact on their lives. They are beginning to talk to staff about this and to look at ways of alerting staff to their anxieties. While there are improvements in young people's behaviour, incidents of concern continue to take place.

Comprehensive behaviour plans and risk assessments are in place to help young people manage their anxieties and behaviours. The plans are fluid and are continually updated to meet young people's ever changing needs. Young people are provided with consistent messages from staff. This enables them to think about their behaviour and begin to consider different ways of managing it, such as a reduction in drinking alcohol and the need to leave the home with permission.

Young people live in a physically safe environment. They are protected from any hazards by comprehensive health and safety procedures and risk assessments. Staff carry out regular health and safety checks, including fire drills, to ensure the premises are safe and that young people know what to do in case of an emergency.

The recruitment and selection of people working at the home is thorough to make sure young people are protected from having contact with unsuitable people. The Registered Manager ensures discussions take place with applicants on any issues arising from their application and subsequent checks, such as criminal records checks and gaps in employment. All visitors to the home are vetted and appropriately supervised while on the premises.

Leadership and management

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

The home is managed by a qualified and experienced manager. A development plan is in place for the home and this highlights some areas for improvement over the next year. A Statement of Purpose is available to social workers from the local authority, parents and young people. This means they are appropriately informed about the type of care provided to young people. Young people are appropriately informed about the organisation of the home via the young people's guide.

Staff feel supported by the Registered Manager and have a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities. Staff confirm support and guidance is always available and helpful. Regular one-to-one supervision monitors performance, accountability and identifies individual development needs.

Young people are cared for by a committed, caring and qualified team of staff. Appropriate systems are in place to ensure staff attend all of the mandatory training courses. Staff are about to embark on additional rigorous training which includes Autism, mental health and safeguarding level two. This will provide them with the necessary insight into current practice on these conditions and how they affect young people in their care. Staff have a clear understanding of their individual roles and responsibilities, this means they are able to provide good care and support to young people.

There are sufficient staff on duty to meet the young people's needs. Records and documentation are generally well maintained. However incident reports are not always sufficiently detailed. This means young people may not have an accurate reflection of their time at the home should they access their records now or in the future. Monitoring of the quality of care by the Registered Manager and the independent person for the organisation is appropriate. Reports are compiled on a monthly basis and help the Registered Manager consider areas for improvement, such as improving the quality of recording. There are appropriate systems in place to notify Ofsted of any significant issues with regards to the young people.

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.