

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Jacqueline Malcolm
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home provides care and support for four young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home is managed by the local authority.

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 good quality care for young people. Individualised, well organised care planning support young people's diverse needs. Staff work collaboratively with other professionals and partner agencies to secure young people's access to education and health services. Staff value education and work hard to ensure that young people are consistently supported and enabled to overcome their difficulties and engage in learning. Young people's health needs are well met through good partnership working with a range of health professionals and agencies. These interventions ensure that young people make steady progress from their starting points.

Young people benefit from living in a homely and caring environment. Staff are competent and consistent and a number of them have many years of childcare experience. Staff demonstrate good levels of engagement with young people, which makes them approachable. Professionals and relatives rate the staff team highly and consider the young people to be well cared for and protected at the home. Staff understand their safeguarding responsibilities and go to great lengths to keep young people safe. Young people say that they like most of the staff, feel safe, listened to and know how to complain.

The home is effectively managed. Since the last inspection, the Registered Manager has returned to the home following a six months secondment. Young people continued to make steady progress with minimal disruption during this period. Adequate management oversight ensures good standards are maintained. However, monitoring reports do not incorporate consultation feedback from relatives and professionals. Minor shortfalls in the homes medication records and staff meeting

minutes does not provide a clear audit, so does not promote transparency. Good practice recommendations are therefore made regarding these matters. These shortfalls currently have not negatively impacted on the welfare of young people.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure the views, wishes and feelings of children and those significant to them are taken into account in monitoring staff and in developing the home. In particular, ensure that monitoring reports produced under regulation 33 and 34 demonstrate this (NMS 1.7)
- ensure there is a written record of all medication, treatment and first aid given to children during their placement. Specifically, ensure that records are updated when children are administered prescribed medication or when it is refused (NMS 6.15)
- ensure entries in records are legible, clearly expressed, non-stigmatising and distinguish as far as possible between fact, opinion and third party information. Specifically, ensure entries in staff meeting minutes are clear and consistently reflect the issues raised. (NMS 22.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people make good progress at the home. They are helped to deal with their past and current difficulties at their own steady pace. Good contact arrangements ensure that young people maintain positive links with family, friends and significant others. This enables them to maintain their cultural identity and sense of belonging.

Young people enjoy improved health as a result of the support and advice that they receive. They understand the importance of healthy eating. They are also aware about the negative impact that smoking, drugs and alcohol misuse can have on their health and well-being and make informed choices. This has resulted in some young people's positive engagement with health promotion services and professional agencies, which has resulted in better health outcomes.

Young people have an educational placement, either at school, college or alternative provision. Most young people are actively engaged in education. They are well supported and most are on track to reach their goals and aspirations. Young people, particularly those who have a long history of non-engagement in education due to their previous risk taking behaviours have secured college and work placements. Young people's life chances are improved when they take advantage of the learning opportunities available to them.

Young people's passage to adulthood is enhanced at an early stage by their contributions to household tasks, the running of the home and taking responsibility for their behaviour. One young person says that, 'Staff are helping me cook.' This ensures that they develop useful practical and social skills that will help them when they move into independence.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit and enjoy really good relationships with staff and each other. Staff are experienced and treat the young people as individuals with their own distinguishing characters. This places young people at the centre of child care practice, which makes them feel cared about. Young people like living at the home. One young person said, 'I love it here. It's more chilled and relaxed. Staff are nice and friendly.' Incidents of challenging behaviour are few, which results in minimal consequences for negative behaviours. This is due to clear and consistent boundaries that young people are responsive to. Young people know how to complain. The few complaints made are resolved to young people's satisfaction. Young people's wishes and feelings are ascertained in a number of ways. For example, individual key work sessions, young people's meetings, statutory reviews, during Regulation 33 visits and continuous dialogue with staff. These measures ensure that young people feel listened to and their wishes are acted on wherever possible.

Good, collaborative working practices with other professionals, partner agencies and relatives improve young people's outcomes; promotes transparency and continuity of care. Professionals and relatives comment positively about the quality of care that young people receive. A social worker said, 'This has always been the most stable home. This feels like a good home.' Relatives say that, 'Staff do everything for her and have eyes in the back of their heads' and 'They are like angels' and 'Couldn't ask for anyone better.'

Young people are involved in the development of their placement plans, which specifically meet their diverse needs. This ensures that young people understand the rationale for their placement and can participate fully in their care planning. Young people attend their statutory review meetings and contribute to them. This ensures that their views continue to be fully taken into account.

Young people are provided with good quality health care and support. Staff are trained in first aid and are competent to deal with medical emergencies. This protects young people's safety and welfare. Medication is safely stored and administered, but some gaps in medication records do not indicate the reason why medication has not been administered. This does not ensure a clear and safe audit trail. Individual health plans inform staff about young people's physical, emotional and psychological health needs. This promotes consistent and safe practice. Young people are supported to make and attend health appointments. This ensures that they receive appropriate advice and treatment that will improve their health. Where young people have specific health needs, their access to specialist health

professionals effectively supports them to manage their health conditions. This improves their quality of life.

Young people are exceptionally well supported by the home to attend their educational placements and achieve their goals. Young people understand the importance of attending their educational provision and most of them consistently engage through regular attendance. This improves their training, employment opportunities and life chances. Young people have access to a range of enjoyable activities. One young person enthusiastically said that staff are arranging basketball and boxing activities for them. Young people enjoy visits to the cinema, trips to places of interest, outdoor pursuits, pamper evenings, socialising with friends and going on holiday. This promotes their confidence and gives them a personal sense of achievement.

Young people live in a comfortable and well-maintained home, which is suitably located. This enables young people to access local and community facilities, which promotes their independence. Young people say they like the way the home is furnished and decorated. Positive comments made by relatives and professionals who visit the home support a pleasant, homely environment that respects and values young people.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say that they feel safe at the home. They know that staff care about them and can identify adults that they can approach to discuss any concerns or worries. One young person said that, 'I feel safe because if you go outside, they (staff) will ask you where you are going and they will ring you. They also check you at night.' Young people do not identify bullying as a concern and understand that this behaviour is unacceptable. One incident of bullying has been effectively addressed and young people observed that this was taken seriously by senior management.

Missing from home incidents have significantly reduced over time, which means that young people are safer. However, should this happen, staff know how to access the home's procedural guidance and agreed police protocol for children missing from home. This protects young people, specifically those who have been involved in risky behaviours outside of the home. Young people benefit from individual risk assessments that identify specific issues for consideration and responses. This promotes young people's safety. Young people are rarely restrained and sanctions imposed are minimal. This is indicative of the consistent and effective behaviour management strategies that reduce the incidents of challenging behaviour. This ensures a calm home environment most of the time.

The home has good working relationships with the police and safeguarding agencies. One social worker commented about how well the home has safeguarded a young person who was at serious risk of harm in the community. The level of risk presented has significantly reduced since they were placed at the home. This demonstrates the

good, working together arrangements that minimise risk and helps young people learn self-protection strategies.

Young people are protected by good safeguarding measures that promote their sense of safety and well-being. This includes consistent care from a stable staff team and robust checks on visitors to ensure that young people are not in contact with unsuitable people. A range of environmental and fire safety checks are routinely carried out. This provides a physically secure and safe home environment for young people to live.

Leadership and management

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

Young people benefit immensely from living in a well managed home that has a Registered Manager and a very stable and established staff team. This promotes positive attachments and ensures that young people are afforded good opportunities to reach their potential. The Registered Manager has recently returned to the home following a six month absence. Good interim management support during this period provided young people with continuity of care and minimal disruption. The manager has returned with new ideas, such as personally chairing young people's meetings so that young people's views are responded to without undue delay. Good deputising arrangements in place support the effective leadership in the home.

The home's Statement of Purpose meets the aims and objectives of the home. Young people know about the services that they can expect to receive. Professionals and relatives speak positively about the home, in particular, the good communication levels and standards of care provided. On relative said, 'The communication is fantastic' and 'She could not have come to a better place.'

Young people are cared for by a sufficient number of experienced and qualified staff who know them well and can meet their diverse needs. Staff are confident and motivated in their work. Young people confirm that staff are approachable and friendly. One young person said, 'Staff are nice and friendly.' Staff are regularly supervised and supported. This enables them to effectively care for young people. Staff complete mandatory and refresher training and say that the training informs their practice. Staff meetings and daily changeovers regularly take place at the home. These arrangements provide young people with consistent, good quality and safe care.

One recommendation made at the last inspection has been addressed. This demonstrates the home's capacity to improve. The manager is acutely aware about the home's strengths, weaknesses and a development plan is in place. This enables a team approach to enhancing outcomes for young people. Adequate internal and external monitoring systems improve the quality of care. However, consultation with parents and social workers are not incorporated into the reports. This does not make clear how the views of external stakeholders influence management oversight.

Young people live in a home that is sufficiently resourced and well maintained to an exceptionally good standard. One social worker said about the home environment, 'This feels like a "normal" home.' Pleasant relationships are promoted with neighbours and formal police presence at the home is minimal. This enables young people to successfully integrate into the community and keep a low profile.

Young people's records are securely stored, well maintained and demonstrate their good progress and development. This helps young people to understand their lives now and in the future. However, some medication records and staff team meeting minutes are not clear and accurate. This does not ensure robust information about young people that has a clear audit trail.

Notifications are appropriately sent to agencies, including Ofsted, which safeguards 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.