

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Sarah Oldham
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is owned and managed by a metropolitan borough council. The home can accommodate six young people and has been set up specifically to provide care to young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties. It is anticipated that young people will live at the home on a medium- to long-term basis.

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 young people make good progress. Their individual health care needs are clearly identified and met. All young people are involved in planning menus and they eat healthily. They access a range of activities to further promote their health and wellbeing. Where additional specialist health care support is required, staff are proactive in ensuring that this is sourced. These measures promote, support and meet young people's physical and emotional wellbeing.

The educational needs of young people are supported and all young people are attending school, further educational facilities or vocational training. Staff support young people with homework and have developed strong links with schools and named teachers. This enables a continuity of support for individual young people.

Young people enjoy positive relationships with staff. They say that they feel safe and that the staff support them to understand the importance of keeping safe. This is also in relation to the likelihood of young people going missing. Although there are still incidence of young people missing from the home, these have decreased, especially in connection to high risk behaviours. The home works closely with police and effective recording systems are in place to enable staff to monitor and address any concerns.

Social workers and independent reviewing officers report that young people are well cared for and they are achieving positive outcomes. One young person said: 'I have really settled here, staff care about me and it is a really nice place to live.'

The manager undertakes effective monitoring of the home, in particular relationship to the care and support provided to all the young people. Regular staff meetings and daily hand-over meetings enable effective and clear communication to ensure that young people receive continuity of care and support. Monthly Regulation 33 monitoring visits provide a clear overview of how the home is continuing to meet the needs of the young people. Any shortfalls that are identified are responded to effectively and demonstrate a commitment to improving the service. The requirement made at the last inspection with regards to control and discipline has been addressed. Sanctions are clear and appropriately recorded.

As a result of this inspection, three recommendations have been made. These relate to ensuring supervision times are clearly recorded, that the Statement of Purpose contains information regarding the current address and contact number of Ofsted and to ensure that the policies and procedures reflect the current National Minimum Standards.

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 a written or electronic record is kept detailing the time, date and length of supervision held for each member of staff (NMS 19.5)
- ensure that the Statement of Purpose and children's guide clearly identifies how to contact Ofsted. This is in relation to ensuring that the address and telephone contact details are correct (NMS 13.5)
- make certain that the management systems of the home ensure that all staff's work is consistent with the new National Minimum Standards. This is in particular reference to policies and procedures clearly identifying the new National Minimum Standards. (NMS 21.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

The home supports the health care needs of the young people. Young people's health care needs are clearly identified and the appropriate services are put in place to enable these needs to be met. Young people attend routine health care appointments, are encouraged and supported to plan and eat healthy meals as well as taking part in a range of leisure activities to promote healthy exercise and healthy lifestyles. Where specialist health care services are required, for example support from Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), staff ensure that support is in place. This enables young people to receive appropriate specialist services.

Clear procedures are in place for the storage, recording and administration of medication that are known and followed by staff. All staff hold a first aid qualification. This ensures that young people's health care is promoted and effectively protected.

All young people attend education regularly either at school, further education college or vocational training. They have made some good progress from their starting points on admission to the home. School reports evidence this and confirm that attendance at school and engagement with education has increased, enabling good results to be achieved.

Contact arrangements for young people are clearly identified for individual young people. Parents and professionals say that staff work well to promote and, where identified, facilitate contact between young people and their family. This enables young people to maintain a sense of their identity and where plans are in place for young people to return home, promotes a positive transition for them.

Young people are supported to develop independence skills in accordance with their age and abilities. They are involved in planning menus, budgeting and shopping as well as contributing to the daily running of the home.

Care plans are kept under review and this ensures that any changes to individual needs are clearly identified and acted upon. Young people have regular individual key worker sessions that enables them to be consulted about their day-to-day life at the home and to plans for their future. They say that they feel they are always involved in decisions that are made about their life and their future.

Quality of care

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

All young people are cared for in accordance with their individual placement plans. These are developed by the home. Staff liaise closely with placing social workers, young people and their parents to ensure that they are detailed and reflect the current needs of the young person. These plans contain comprehensive information about all aspects of care, safety and wellbeing and include any that arise from their culture or religion. These plans are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that any changes in needs are clearly recorded and implemented. They also identify progress that young people make. Young people say that they feel that they have input into their plans and say that they receive recognition and praise for their achievements. One young person said: 'the staff really care about me, they always provide lots of encouragement and this makes me very happy.' Another young person said: 'although it was not my choice to come into care, I look back at the things that I have achieved and know that staff really care about me and want me to do well in whatever I do in the future.'

Education is actively promoted by staff at the home. All of the young people attend

school, further education or vocational training. Staff encourage and support young people to achieve good educational outcomes by supporting them with their homework, maintaining excellent communication links with schools and attending parents evenings and events. The achievements of young people are encouraged and celebrated. One young person said 'I am doing much better at school and my teachers and staff here are really pleased.' These measures ensure that there is a comprehensive and cohesive partnership with schools to support the educational outcomes for the young people.

Staff encourage and support young people to behave in socially acceptable ways. Clear and consistent boundaries are in place and this supports young people to have a good understanding of their behaviours and how it impacts on others. Young people say that they benefit from consistent boundaries and feel that this has helped improve their behaviours and in turn makes them feel safe. Information is available for them on how to make a complaint and they are provided with a range of contacts if they want to talk to someone independently. Information is available regarding contacting Ofsted, however, the address relates to the previous Ofsted office and has not been updated. Young people say that they are able to talk to staff, their social workers or independent visitors if they wish to raise any concerns.

Staff support and encourage young people to take part in a range of activities. This includes visits to parks, cycling, fishing, bowling and trips to the cinema. Individual activity plans are in place to enable young people to follow specific activities that they wish to take part in and there is also opportunity for all young people to take part in activities together. For example all young people spoken with at the time of the inspection had visited the cinema as a group and had enjoyed planning the trip and spending time together. These measures enable young people to develop interests and provide opportunity to continue these activities in the future as well as learning to plan and share leisure time.

The home provides a comfortable and homely environment throughout. Young people have been consulted and involved in planning the décor and furnishings. They all have their own bedrooms which they are supported to personalise to reflect their individual personalities. They are encouraged and supported to take pride in their home. One young person said: 'this is a really comfortable home and I really like it here.'

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 very safe at the home. All staff have undertaken safe care and child protection training. They have also had information and some training regarding child sexual exploitation and have worked closely with police to protect and support young people. The staff have a good understanding of the homes safeguarding procedures and are aware of the signs and symptoms of abuse, including how to report and manage any concerns. There is a clear procedure in place to follow in the event of a young person missing from home. Staff actively

encourage and support young people to keep them informed of their whereabouts. In the event of a young person missing from care the staff endeavour to establish the young person's whereabouts. This includes searching the local area, contacting friends and known acquaintances, continually ringing the young person and liaising with police. Although there have been a number of missing from care incidences, these have decreased. Comprehensive monitoring and recording systems are maintained for all missing from care and this enables appropriate support to be provided to young people who are at risk of this.

All young people are effectively supported in managing their behaviours. Individualised behaviour support plans identify strategies for staff to use to minimise the risk of young people's behaviour becoming challenging. All staff have received training to respond positively to challenging behaviour. This includes training in the use of physical intervention in the event of a young person posing harm to themselves or others. There is minimal use of physical intervention and strategies of de-escalation are used wherever possible. All incidents of physical interventions are clearly recorded and monitored by the manager. This is to establish whether there are any patterns of behaviour and how well staff support and work with young people to ensure that their safety and welfare is promoted. Sanctions are also clearly recorded and detail the effectiveness of them in supporting young people's behaviour. Young people say that they feel that the sanctions they receive are fair, they understand the reasons for them and have opportunity to discuss them with staff.

Staff discuss bullying with young people and are aware of the signs and symptoms to be aware of. The young people say that bullying is not a problem at the home but they discuss it in young people's meetings and are aware of the impact that it can have. All young people spoken to said that they would be able to discuss it with staff and felt confident that it would be addressed.

Recruitment and selection procedures are robust and all visitors to the home are appropriately checked. These measures further promote the safety and welfare of young people.

The home provides a physically safe environment for young people. Regular checks of equipment are undertaken to ensure that the home is safe and free from hazards. In addition, fire drills are undertaken at different times. This ensures that young people know what to do in the event of a fire both during the day and at night.

Leadership and management

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

Young people benefit from being looked after by a consistent and dedicated staff team who have a good understanding of their individual and specific needs. Staff have access to a comprehensive training programme and 90% of staff hold a National Vocational Qualification at level 3. The staff practice is child focused, and consistent levels of staffing ensure the continuity of care for the young people. Staff

have high aspirations for the young people, understand individual needs and provide consistent levels of care and support to help young people achieve positive outcomes.

The management team of the home consists of a Registered Manager and two deputy managers who provide clear and consistent leadership. Staff say that they feel exceptionally well supported within their role. They receive regular supervision and annual appraisals. However, there is some inconsistency in the recording of the supervision and this does not provide a clear overview of all supervisions that have taken place or are planned. Individual supervision records are signed and dated. Regular team meetings and clear handovers ensure that there is effective communication and this enables the staff team to provide consistent levels of care and support to the young people. Young people spoken with said that they felt that they benefited from this. One young person said: 'the staff work well together and they give us good levels of care and support, you don't get crossed messages from them and you know what they expect of you.'

The home operates to the aims and objectives that are detailed within the Statement of Purpose. This document is available to all interested parties and is kept under review to ensure that it is up to date and accurately reflects the home and resources. The young people are provided with a comprehensive children's guide and, wherever possible, are able to have planned visits to the home prior to admission, to meet the other young people and staff, and have an understanding of how the home operates. This enables them to settle in well and one young person said: 'everyone makes you feel welcome and you have an understanding about the home before you move in.' All young people have information regarding their independent reviewing officers and know how to contact them or their social workers.

Social workers and other professionals report that the home is highly effective at working with the them and supporting the young people. They say that communication is excellent and they receive regular updates on the progress and achievements of the young people. They also say that staff contribute effectively to the young people's reviews by providing comprehensive reports prior to the reviews and attending review meetings.

The manager undertakes comprehensive monitoring of the service and there is a clear development plan in place. External monitoring of the service is undertaken each month and a detailed report provided. Any recommendations made following these visits are acted upon appropriately and a clear record maintained of the action taken to address them to improve the outcomes for young people.

Comprehensive and clear care records are maintained for each young person. These provide a clear record of their history, their life during their time at the home and details of development and achievements. These records are kept up to date and stored securely. Young people are supported and encouraged to contribute to these files and records to enable their wishes and views to be reflected throughout their records.

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.