

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 **outstanding**.

Young people are making exceptionally positive progress from their initial placement at the home. They have exceptionally positive relationships with staff and other young people and this contributes towards them feeling safe within a stable and supportive environment. The Registered Manager provides clear leadership and has a good overview of the needs of the young people. The ethos of the home is to ensure that young people are central to all aspects of how the home operates and functions. All practice is child focussed and this is reflected in the positive comments that young people make about the home. Young people benefit from being supported by a highly motivated staff team providing continuity of care and support. Consultation with young people is positive and enables them to have a voice. One young person said 'I am happy living here, staff care about me and want me to do the best I can to have a good future.'

There is a development plan in place and the Registered Manager is clear about what the home does well and areas for on-going improvement.

There is one recommendation made in relation to evaluating the effectiveness of sanctions that are used on a consistent basis. However, this does not impact negatively on the safety and welfare of the 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 that sanctions and rewards for behaviours are clear, reasonable and fair and are understood by all staff and children. This is in particular relation to recording whether sanctions are effective. (NMS 3.8)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Young people make excellent progress and are flourishing through the support and opportunities they have whilst living at the home. An example of this includes making progress in their education. This is through regular attendance at school and additional tuition, resulting in young people's predicted grades improving in order to gain qualifications at General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE's) to contribute to their future.

Young people benefit from having very positive relationships with the staff who are all experienced in working with children and young people. One young person said 'I love living here; the staff provide me with lots of support and encourage me to do well at school.' Another young person said, 'this place feels like a real home, it's so comfortable.' The support they get from the start of their placement to understand about their history and significant events in their lives enables them to build up their resilience, increase their self-esteem, which in turn increases confidence to try new things.

Young people have access to a range of health care professionals to ensure that their health care needs are met. They are also supported to understand the importance of taking responsibility for their own health in accordance with their age and understanding. This is through education about healthy diets, engaging in sporting and recreational activities as well as information and support to stop or significantly reduce smoking. Young people say that this help and support has enabled them to understand how poor diet and smoking impacts on them and has helped them to make changes.

Contact arrangements are clearly identified and supported in accordance with agreed placement plans. Family members are made to feel welcome when they visit the home and staff keep them updated with information regarding their child.

Young people live in an environment that is homely and comfortable. They are actively involved in contributing their views about décor and furnishings as well as designing and personalising their own bedrooms. This enables them to take pride in, and feel that the home is very much theirs.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from receiving excellent levels of care from a consistent, well-trained and highly motivated staff team. Placement planning is underpinned by individualised care plans that clearly identify young people's needs and how they will be supported. They are involved with development of their care plans. Care plans are reviewed on a monthly basis. They identify the progress that young people make and their goals for the forthcoming month. This enables young people to reflect on their progress and to understand their plans for the following month.

Mutual respect is promoted within the home and this supports young people to feel able to express their wishes and views as a group and on an individual basis. Regular young people's meetings are held. This enables them to discuss any issues that they are concerned about as a group. This minimises the risk of any bullying and enables them to address any minor concerns or issues in a supportive environment. There is also a complaints procedure in place if young people wish to make a formal complaint. The manager ensures that complaints are responded to in full in a timely manner.

Young people are encouraged to eat a healthy diet and take part in a range of activities. Meals are, in the main, taken together and provide opportunity for positive interaction and discussion. Menus developed with young people enable them to choose and plan nutritionally balanced meals and contribute to the preparation of these. One young person said 'the food is great and we all have a say in what we want to have.'

All young people have access to local health care resources to enable them to maintain good health. Where required, additional health care resources are sought, for example; Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), drug and alcohol support services and support with smoking cessation. These measures ensure that the holistic health care needs of young people are supported. Systems in place for administering and recording of medication are robust. Regular training on medication administration ensures that staffs knowledge remains current. This further underpins the safe handling and administration of medication to young people.

Educational support provided ensures that young people benefit from attending educational facilities that is most appropriate to meet their individual needs. Attendance at school is excellent and staff are proactive in ensuring effective communication with school is in place to further support good educational outcomes.

Opportunities to develop life skills in preparation for independent living are integral to all aspects of care and support within the home. Examples of this include preparing meals, undertaking laundry and budgeting for clothes and food. They also plan their leisure activities and make use of community resources. This includes local leisure facilities and clubs. This enables them to form friendships away from the home to have a wider social circle.

The home is situated within a residential area, near to a town centre with access to shops, leisure facilities and public transport. It is clean, comfortable and provides a homely environment with space for young people to enjoy privacy should they need it as well as comfortable communal areas. Young people contribute their views about the décor within the home, including their individual bedrooms and this enables them to take pride in their home.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Safeguarding and the well-being of young people is central to the practice of all staff. They undertake a range of training to underpin their practice including safeguarding, total respect training and positive behaviour management. Young people say that they feel safe living at the home. They say that they are supported to understand about staying safe and understanding risks. There are comprehensive risk assessments in place that identify potential risks and how to manage these. Staff are aware that no risk can be fully removed but having a clear understanding of how to manage the risks ensure a continuity of care and support to the young people.

There are extremely robust procedures in place if a young person goes missing from home. The home has developed good links with the community police and this enables effective communication to support young people in the event of them being reported as missing. Staff continue to be proactive in supporting young people to return to the home. Young people say that they feel settled at the home and try to make sure that they return at agreed times. There has been a significant decrease in the number of occasions when young people have been reported missing and in the past four months there have been no incidents of young people being missing.

Staff support young people to help them manage their behaviours. This is supported through consistent support and guidance. Calm reassurance is provided and de-escalation techniques are used. Rewards and sanctions are in place to further enable young people to understand how behaviours impact on themselves or others. These are clearly recorded and young people are offered the opportunity to comment on them. The manager has an overview of these records. However, the effectiveness of sanctions is not consistently commented on to demonstrate whether the sanction is appropriate and enables young people to reflect on their behaviour. Where physical intervention is used, this is clearly recorded and the views of the young people gained. The number of physical interventions remains low.

Robust recruitment and selection processes ensure that all staff working at the home have completed application forms and references are in place and verified along with Disclosure and Barring Scheme (DBS) checks completed. This ensures that the home takes all suitable measures to follow safe recruitment practice to safeguard young people.

The home provides a safe, pleasant and homely accommodation for young people to live in. Regular maintenance and building risk assessments are undertaken to ensure that this remains the case.

Leadership and management

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

The Registered Manager has a background in residential care, holds appropriate qualifications and demonstrates a high level of professional competence to lead and manage a staff team to deliver high quality care and support to young people. She is supported within her role by two experienced and qualified deputy managers who provide additional management support in her absence.

Young people benefit from being supported and cared for by a well-managed, consistent staff team of whom the vast majority hold a level 3 qualification in Caring for Children and Young People. The other staff are in the process of undertaking this. Staff have experience of working with young people, are child focussed and have a range of skills and experience to provide effective care. A rolling programme of training is in place for staff. This enables them to keep their skills and knowledge up to date to provide consistently positive care experiences for young people. Detailed handovers and regular staff meetings ensure that young people's care is consistently met and provides a continuity of support from all staff.

Monthly monitoring by the manager is comprehensive and complemented by independent monthly visits to the home by an external visitor. Detailed reports are generated enabling a clear overview of how needs of young people are being supported and met. A development plan in place provides a strategic direction for the levels of care and support for the future. Staff are exceptionally positive about how the home operates and functions. They say that they are fully included within development discussions, receive training and supervision and bi-annual appraisals. These measures ensure young people are supported by highly motivated staff.

Young people's case files are clearly recorded and kept secure. They are kept up to date to ensure that information reflects current levels of need, their development and progress. Young people are able to access their files and staff explain all information to them.

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.