

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Angela Whiteley
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This service is a privately run children's home. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to seven children or young people with emotional and/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 **outstanding**.

This home is highly regarded by young people, their parents and professionals, such as independent reviewing officers, social workers and youth offending officers.

Young people settle quickly in an exceptionally caring and supportive environment. They make excellent progress across all aspects of their welfare and development, particularly in terms of education, health and behaviour. They have a strong sense of safety and are protected from significant harm. A parent said, 'my son is making good progress in a home with a proper family feel.'

Young people are supported by a highly motivated and competent stable staff team who have high aspirations for them to achieve their potential. Staff work tirelessly to promote the personal growth and development of each young person. This is achieved through strong and trusting relationships between staff and young people in conjunction with careful and considered target setting and incentives.

Young people confirm they feel safe and say that staff always have time for them. All aspects of care planning and practice are highly personalised and tailored to meet the individual needs of each young person. Placement plans and risk assessments are reviewed regularly ensuring the diverse needs of young people are thoroughly considered. Staff are proactive when managing young people who engage in risk taking and challenging behaviour. This is a particular challenge to staff when new young people arrive in crisis and have a history of going missing from home and take

part in anti-social and offending behaviour. Staff support young people to make positive choices to overcome particular crisis, which significantly reduces risk taking behaviours and helps them become more confident young adults.

The Registered Manager and deputy provide strong leadership and have a clear commitment to an improvement agenda. They fully understand the strengths of the service and effectively use the quality assurance systems to develop the provision further. Staff are well managed and guided in their tasks and demonstrate a sound understanding of safe working practices. A placing authority has commented on how impressed they are with the professionalism of the Registered Manager and the staff.

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Young people benefit enormously from the support provided by an experienced and knowledgeable staff team who have high expectations of them. They make significant improvements in their education, health, emotional development, relationships and personal safety. They contribute to the running of the home through daily discussion with staff and regular attendance at young people's meetings where discussions are held about meal choices, activities and other special events.

Young people who have been at the home for some time benefit from the stability and permanence of the placement. They have strong and trusting relationships with staff and feel secure enough to express their views, wishes, feelings and worries in constructive ways. Those new to the home settle quickly. This is reflected in the significant progress made from their admission with improved health, regular education attendance and achievement and significant reductions in risk taking behaviours, such as choosing not to go missing from home.

Young people develop new coping strategies with the support of staff and other professionals, such as anger management and effective use of positive behaviour management plans. This helps them through particular difficulties and keeps them safe. As a result, the need for physical restraint and sanctions is minimal. The commitment and motivation of staff, the use of behaviour management strategies, therapeutic support and effective incentives and rewards, helps to strengthen young people's emotional resilience and psychological well-being. As a result, young people begin to make exceptional progress in all areas of their lives.

Young people have detailed health assessments and enjoy good health. They are supported to attend all their medical appointments. Staff provide good information and guidance on a range of health issues including the dangers of smoking, substance misuse and sexual health. Young people enjoy a balanced and healthy diet that includes a range of diverse foods and takes account of young people's particular likes, dislikes and cultural and religious requirements. Young people enjoy a broad range of social and sporting activities of their choice, which helps maintain their psychological and physical health. Young people participate in community activities;

this is inclusive and develops community cohesion.

All young people engage in education and attendance is excellent. Staff offer strong support with individualised incentives that help to motivate young people to maintain full attendance and they do well. Young people have ambitious but realistic career plans that they wish to pursue. They are proactive, with staff support, in pursuing further education courses that help them achieve their potential.

Young people benefit from clear, safe contact arrangements, understanding when they will see their family and other significant people. They have good support from staff to maintain regular contact visits. Young people's identity and family origin are viewed as very important in developing positive self-esteem. This is promoted by staff helping young people prepare life-story work and photo albums. Young people have the same social experiences as other young people their age; this includes spending time seeing friends, friends visiting and staying for tea.

Individualised planning prepares young people well for independence. Young people are encouraged to develop their independence skills at a pace to suit them and tailored to their individual needs. Young people complete work-books to demonstrate the skills they have achieved, which benefits them when they move on into adult life.

Quality of care

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

Young people feel staff are genuinely concerned about their welfare and that they will go the extra mile to help them achieve their goals. One young person said, 'the staff are easy to get on with and care.' Family and other professionals involved in their care also endorse the high quality of care and support provided. An independent reviewing officer commented on how impressed he is with the way staff handle and support young people in their care.

Young people develop very warm and positive relationships with members of staff and with each other. They receive high quality care and support from an experienced and stable staff team who effectively deliver individualised and well-planned packages of care. As a result, young people settle quickly and have a strong sense of belonging. Staff work tirelessly to provide opportunities for young people to succeed. They are not daunted by initial setbacks or failures but are relentless in their efforts to help young people get back on track. They are very skilled in engaging young people. This is confirmed by a placing authority team manager who wrote, 'staff respect individual needs and communicate in a non-judgemental and respectful manner.'

Staff work proactively with young people and their placing authority to ensure reviews are timely and include the views of young people. Young people fully participate in all aspects of planning, which means they know what progress they are making. Young people's views are central to staff practice. Young people's meetings take place regularly and cover a range of diverse topics. In particular, equality and

diversity is promoted through open discussions in a safe environment. Young people know how to make a complaint if they are unhappy with any aspect of their care. There have been no complaints at this home for some time as young people are comfortable to discuss any issues with staff on a daily basis.

Staff have a strong commitment to supporting young people with their educational achievements, access to health support services and in responding to diversity and cultural needs. Staff ensure daily routines support young people's participation in education and school attendance. They have established strong links with educational providers. They work effectively with providers to challenge and overcome any barriers to young people's full participation in education. For example, helping young people find and manage suitable college placements when they have a history of high risk behaviours. Achievements are celebrated in the home which increases young people's confidence and self-esteem.

Certificates, drawings and photographs are prominently displayed in the home; as a result, young people feel valued and this significantly promotes their self-esteem. Young people are involved in an excellent range of activities, such as swimming, gym, boxing, fishing, and enjoy outings away from the home. They follow individual interests and develop their talents. Young people confirm there is always plenty to do. This enhances their learning experiences and increases their social networks and self-esteem.

The home is a large spacious three-storey house in a residential area at the edge of a park. It is well furnished and decorated. There is ample comfortable living space, with large communal rooms for young people to get together and other rooms for young people to have privacy should they wish. Each of the bedrooms are well furnished and most are personalised by young people who show pride in keeping them clean and tidy. The home is warm and welcoming and provides young people with a safe and secure environment.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people feel safe and protected from harm and understand that bullying is not acceptable. The home has a strong culture that bullying and discriminatory behaviour is not tolerated. This is supported by rigorous policies and procedures. Young people have confidence in the staff to deal with bullying and discrimination if it does occur. Staff effectively balance the need for protection while enabling young people to take reasonable risks as part of their growth and development.

Most young people admitted to the home have a history of going missing and some exhibit anti-social and offending behaviour. Staff quickly develop strong relationships with young people and are effective in encouraging them to think carefully about the choices they make, which will affect their future quality of life. As young people settle into their placement they choose not to run away from the home. The home's

records show a significant reduction in young people being reported missing. Any incidents that do occur are dealt with appropriately and young people return home quickly and safely. Risk taking behaviours are well managed using a positive and effective response to young people's specific needs.

There are excellent systems in place for responding to allegations and suspicions of harm. Staff fully understand safeguarding policies and procedures and receive regular refresher training, which enables them to respond appropriately to any concerns about young people.

Staff place a strong emphasis on promoting positive behaviour through praise, rewards and incentives and they regularly talk through problems with young people in a constructive way. Young people say they are treated fairly. Young people benefit from a nurturing and consistent approach where they understand what is expected of them and know the consequences for any unacceptable behaviour. These are effective measures, as sanctions are minimal and effective.

Staff are trained in the appropriate use of physical restraint, which is only used as a last resort. There have been two incidents of restraint since the last inspection as praise and individual positive incentives are more effective measures to manage young people's behaviour. Incidents have reduced as young people settle in the home and others have moved out. The manager maintains detailed records to enable them to identify patterns and trends and evaluates these effectively.

Robust and thorough recruitment and vetting procedures are in place and visitors to the home are checked and supervised as appropriate. Young people enjoy a safe and secure environment in a home where there is a strong ethos on safeguarding. Health and safety guidelines are followed and there are effective assessments in place of any hazards in the home.

Leadership and management

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

Young people live in a home that is effectively and efficiently managed in their best interests and meets the aims and objectives of its Statement of Purpose. Young people, parents and placing social workers are clear about the services and support the home provides.

The Registered Manager leads by example and is supported by a skilled and competent deputy manager and a stable staff team. He has an effective management style that consistently promotes high expectations for staff to provide high quality care and a smooth running home. As a result, staff clearly demonstrate a strong commitment to delivering high quality practice that is tailored to the individual needs of young people they care for. The effectiveness of this approach is evidenced by the excellent progress young people are making.

Staff are sufficient in number and have a broad range of experiences and skills to

meet the everyday challenges of caring for young adults. Staff are effectively supported, guided and valued through excellent professional supervision, team meetings and training; this enables them to practice independently and confidently. There is also a strong, collaborative team dynamic, which ensures a consistent approach in working with young people to promote their safety and welfare.

Young people's records are extremely detailed and present a good overall picture of their experiences at the home. Records are maintained to a very high standard and information is well organised within care files. Young people can access their records with support from staff, which helps them to understand their history and plans.

Exceptional levels of monitoring and quality assurance have been developed to ensure that young people continue to enjoy high standards of care. Monthly monitoring reports review the home's performance and young people's progress and identify areas for improvement. Consultations with young people, parents and other professionals influence the progress of the home. The manager has a realistic understanding of the strengths of the service and promptly addresses areas where improvements can be made. The home has a realistic development plan that is reviewed regularly to drive forward further improvement. The quality of care at this home is consistently high; as a result, there are no requirements or recommendations from this inspection.

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.