

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Michelle Spruce
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home provides care and accommodation for up to four young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home is operated by a borough council.

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 service is outstanding and the key strengths lie within a strong, committed work force lead by a passionate and dedicated Registered Manager. The manager efficiently and effectively tracks improved outcomes for young people through regular monitoring and evaluation. Robust development plans secure improvement and highlight patterns and trends.

Young people's safety is at the heart of the delivery of care. Staff proactively commit to ensuring young people are safe, and provide highly personalised behaviour plans along with excellent partnership working with external partners. Young people say they feel safe and despite the difficulties they face, young people are protected from harm.

The effectiveness with which the home provides personalised, well-planned care is a result of high quality placement planning. The relationships are strong and built on trust and respect. Staff are passionate and care about the needs of young people and take great steps to ensure they are consulted. Young people's views are valued and influence the running of the home.

There is one shortfall to the service, and as a result, one 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 where there has been physical restraint, children's homes must be able to call on medical assistance as required and children are always given the opportunity to be examined by a registered nurse or practitioner. (NMS 3.16)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make significant improvement from their starting point despite the difficulties they face in forming attachments and developing a positive self-view. Young people understand where they are from and why they are in care because staff promote the importance of identity. Young people say, 'I feel beautiful when I look in the mirror.' This means young people develop confidence and pride in self-image and heritage.

Young people take exceptional care of their environment and belongings because they are proud of who they are and their achievements. They choose their own clothes and decorate their bedrooms to reflect personal preference. Young people make appropriate choices when making friends and respect differences, for example in regards to ethnicity, race or disability. As a result, of positive social experiences young people are more resilient to acceptance of change and now form better attachments with others.

Young people benefit from a diverse range of health support agencies external to the home; this support significantly improves their health and fitness. Young people recognise the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle because they do not take part in activities detrimental to their health, such as smoking. Young people are enthusiastic about healthy living and choose appropriate meals that they prepare and cook. Young people say, 'I eat healthy have my height and weight checked and go to the dentist and optician. I choose healthy food that is good for you and stop eating junk, sweets and crisps. I keep physically fit by walking and using the Wii Fit'. Staff comment that young people make excellent progress from their starting point because weight improves and diet is nutritious and healthy. As a result, young people's health and well-being thrive.

Young people make remarkable improvement in educational achievement and attendance, despite the barriers they face because they are committed to self-improvement and development. Some young people achieve 100% attendance and comment they love school and have fun. Where young people struggle to attend the school environment, staff work in partnership to implement plans that provide external individual support. This means, education can take place without affecting the academic achievement. Young people benefit from additional resources, such as computers, that they access in the home that further assist their learning potential.

Young people enjoy regular contact with friends and family. Some young people benefit from overnight stays with their friends and feel equal and no different from their peers. The home ensures that visitors to young people are welcome and comfortable during their stay. Young people's family say, 'staff are really nice and friendly and I also visit for tea and birthday parties. I make requests to visit by phone and the home always meets them.'

Young people make excellent progress to develop skills for independence. There is a strong sense of pride in the home that is emphasised by the effort young people take to do things for themselves while remaining respectful and courteous to others. Young people make a concerted effort to keep their rooms clean and tidy, wash their own clothes and prepare and cook meals of their choice. This means young people prepare well for leaving care and truly value the importance of skills to enhance their life chances.

Quality of care

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

Staff are extremely successful in developing and maintaining positive relationships because they are honest and transparent in their approach during consultation. Through positive, regular engagement during circle time, young people can express their feelings and emotions and the impact they have on others. Young people say, 'My key worker tries to understand what I say and helps me and makes me laugh.' This means relationships remain positive and as a result, young people become confident in speaking up for themselves.

Young people are extremely courteous to staff and each other and show respect and good manners. Young people behave appropriately because staff invest quality time and support in every aspect of their lives. Staff are highly committed and promote a range of diverse subjects including, religion, disability and faith. Young people benefit from strong community links and make positive friendships within the community. This means young people feel socially accepted and valued.

Staff ensure young people receive high quality care because they work tirelessly in partnership with external agencies. Young people thrive from the additional services provided that enhance both their physical and emotional health. Young people remain in stable and safe placements because they know how much they are cared for and recognise the milestones they have achieved. This is because staff do not give up and young people remain the focus in the delivery of care. Staff receive training in handling medication and systems for receiving, administration, storage and disposal of medication are robust. Staff now ensure during shift change over that medication records are checked.

The home provides a spacious and well-resourced home tailored to meet the diverse needs of young people. There are a range of games, books and puzzles in the home and additionally a Wii Fit that young people take great pleasure competing against

each other with. Staff provide external opportunities for young people to explore their own personalities by accessing a range of clubs after school and during holidays. As a result, young people experience freedom of choice and develop social skills that enhance positive behaviour.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Staff make young people's safety a priority. Young people say, 'I feel safe here because staff help you to stay safe.' Staff continually monitor risk and adjust the boundaries accordingly ensuring that experiences are not compromised. For example, staff recognise when young people can manage added responsibility and may adjust the times young people are expected home. This means risk is evaluated on an individual basis and keeps young people safe. Staff recognise the vulnerability of young people and work with them to reassure their fears. For example, where young people feel afraid of the dark monitoring devices are used to provide the young person with a measure to be heard should they need assistance during the night. Staff ensure consent and agreement is provided and young people comment that they now feel safe as a result. Young people's privacy is protected because staff provide risk assessments for activities such as swimming, showering or taking a bath.

Staff benefit from a lone working policy to protect young people from harm and to ensure that their own safety remains protected. This is reviewed on a regular basis during supervision and helps to recognise areas of risk. As a result, staff and young people remain safe.

Young people rarely go missing and missing from care behaviour has significantly reduced because young people feel safe in the home and understand the risk of potential harm. The home works in partnership with the police to ensure that when young people are absent from the home measures are taken to identify and return the young person home safely and sensitively.

Staff recognise that bullying manifests in many different ways and are proactive in tackling incidents of bullying quickly and efficiently. Young people take part in weekly discussions to address any concerns regarding bullying and are further supported to raise concerns through an external advocacy service. This protects young people from harm.

There is remarkable improvement in young people's behaviour because staff work hard to recognise the triggers and implement robust strategies and behaviour plans. Young people comment that they used to have bad behaviour that required physical intervention, however this is no longer the case because they can manage their feelings better. Where it is necessary to use physical intervention the records are not always consistent in demonstrating that young people are given the opportunity to be seen by a nurse or medical practitioner. This means young people's rights are not always exercised.

Young people are protected from harm because the home implements an effective recruitment process that ensures any potential unsuitable candidates are vetted before employment. The home remains safe because regular health and safety monitoring is undertaken and any hazards removed. Young people say they take part in fire drills and understand the evacuation procedure. Staff receive fire safety training and occasionally drills take place during the night. This means the home provides a safe environment for young people, staff and visitors.

Leadership and management

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

The home benefits from a Registered Manager who has exceptional experience and skill and leads a dedicated, skilled and stable staff team. The manager says, 'The service is efficiently and effectively managed because there is a range of consistent experienced staff balanced with new ones who understand the service. Young people benefit from having stable reviewing officers that support the quality of care and recognise improved outcomes. Additionally, I love my job and have over twenty years' experience.'

Furthermore, the manager is excellent at monitoring the home and uses a monitoring tool. The monitoring tool tracks patterns and trends because it monitors events in specific areas, for example, measures of control or physical intervention. The record shows a yearly overview and graphs support the amount of occurrences under each heading so the manager can address patterns and trends, this then supports the development plan. Additionally, Regulation 33 visitor reports on the home along with the managers Schedule 6 monitoring.

The manager addresses complaints in a timely manner and resolves issues. Young people understand the complaints procedure and know when their rights are breached because they have excellent relationships with staff and openly discuss any issues. Staff take action to address any complaint and support the young person where necessary. As a result, complaints are minimal.

The home is extremely successful at demonstrating the impact and value that living in the home has had on children and young people's lives and how their life chances have improved because of the positive outcomes achieved from starting point. The manager says, 'evidence is shown in the improvement young people make this shows we are doing well and continuing to improve. Placements are successful, stable nurturing. Young people are placed appropriately, thrive, and develop both emotionally and physically. Their progress is demonstrated through their outcomes'.

Staff receive regular supervision and benefit from annual employee performance assessment. All training is up to date and staff recently received specialist training in Autism to meet the needs of young people. This ensures personal development and meets any changes in legislation.

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.