

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Joanne Vyas
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home provides residential care for seven young people with learning difficulties. It is owned and 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**.

This is a happy home with a family-style atmosphere. Young people enjoy a high level of individualised care and support from a warm and dedicated team of staff. Staff are proud of the young people and the achievements they have made. It is clear that young people benefit from a family-style home where they are central to all practice. This demonstrates a strong commitment towards an inclusive service. The management team have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the service.

Three recommendations have been made with regards to: the Statement of Purpose, risk assessment of young people who are aged 18 or over and promoting healthy eating.

A young person said, 'The home is a brilliant home – I would recommend it.'

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 home has a clear Statement of Purpose. This specifically refers to ensuring it accurately reflects the current service offered to children who have emotional and behavioural difficulties (NMS 13.1)

- ensure children's health is promoted in accordance with their placement plan and staff are clear about what responsibilities and decisions are delegated to them (NMS 6.5)
- ensure action is taken to address any issues of concern. This specifically refers to identifying any potential impact of young adults (a resident who is 18 years or over) living with young people who are under the age of 18. (NMS 21.9)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people enjoy living at this home. They call it their 'home' and have excellent relationships with staff. A young person said, 'This is the best home ever.' Young people make good progress with regards to their self-esteem and confidence. A social worker commented, 'His confidence has grown beyond my wildest imagination.'

Young people benefit from living active lives which helps them to stay fit. For example, young people are encouraged to go for a walk each day and take part in sports and swimming. However, young people are not always provided with healthy meals. This may be a contributory factor in some young people putting on an excessive amount of weight. Healthcare professionals say this may have future implications for their health. Furthermore, some young people are struggling to make healthy choices at mealtimes despite interventions from staff such as healthy eating posters and discussions.

All young people have an education placement in a school or college. Those in school are all full time and attend enthusiastically. Those in college placements have part-time provision for which they are equally enthusiastic about attending. Young people who have previously not attended school before moving to this home are now full-time attenders. Young people have aspirations for their future such as becoming an actor or working with children.

Young people benefit from actively participating in day-to-day and more complex decisions about their lives. They are involved in making plans for their future, holidays, trips out as well as menus and décor around the home. Young people value and enjoy the involvement they have with their local and wider community from accessing the local youth club to representing looked after children on the Children in Care Council. Young people regularly have discussions with their children's rights officer which ensures they know and understand their rights.

Quality of care

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

Staff are enthusiastic and committed to providing a good quality service for young people. Young people said they like living in this home and said they get on well with

staff. Young people have strong positive relationships with staff. Staff know and understand the young people well. They provide a compassionate, nurturing and therapeutic environment which helps young people to feel safe and cared for.

Young people usually have a planned admission. A social worker said, 'The transitional period before he moved in was so well integrated with the other young people and he felt safe. It was a smooth transition.' Young people have access to a child-friendly welcome pack which is a useful introduction to the home.

Young people confirmed they know how to make a complaint if they wish to do so. They also know people they can talk to outside the home such as their social worker and children's rights officer. Young people have opportunities to put any concerns forward at the monthly house meetings which are also sometimes attended by the children's rights officer. One complaint has been made since the last inspection but this was satisfactorily resolved quickly and effectively.

Staff ensure young people have access to appropriate healthcare professionals such as doctors, opticians and the dentist. Healthcare workers such as mental health workers, looked after children's nurses and dieticians visit the home regularly. This provides staff with the appropriate skills and knowledge to ensure young people's physical and mental well-being is promoted. A healthcare worker said, 'Staff are genuine and care about the kids. They are very dedicated to their young people.' However, they also said, 'I liaise closely with the key worker who actively encourages healthy eating but do wonder if everyone is consistent. I am concerned about weight issues at this home.'

Staff in the home have a good operational relationship with professionals they work with. However, some professionals do not feel staff work well with them which does not lead to effective partnership working. This may mean that young people do not receive the full support they require. For example some professionals when talking about practice in the home, used phrases like, 'Not taken seriously'; 'There is a lack of understanding' and alluded to inconsistent practice and poor communication whereas others said, 'Everyone is well looked after. The key worker was excellent – kept me updated. They really cared about the child. We worked well together especially as she was leaving' and 'The support has been robust and considered. They are very good at communicating.' Senior managers are aware of these issues and are currently trying to resolve them.

Young people love the activities on offer and the trips they go on such as holidays to Scotland and Egypt. A young person said, 'I've never been abroad before. We went on quad bikes. It was a good holiday.' They enjoy a wide variety of activities within the local and wider community. They attend a local youth club, swimming pool, horse riding, bowling, cinema and access the theatre. Young people have recently seen Phantom of the Opera in London and plans are being made to access the theatre over the Christmas period. Young people have recently enjoyed the local authority's 'Celebrating success' annual event for looked after children. Younger children were also looking forward to their similar event for which they proudly showed off their new outfits.

Young people enjoy their en-suite bedrooms which are highly personalised. Communal areas are bright, comfortable and clean. A disco room is very popular with disco-type lights and loud music; young people enjoy singing and dancing here. Photographs of the young people adorn the walls providing a warm and welcoming home. Outdoor space includes a sensory garden as well as safe play space. Additionally, two sensory huts are just being completed for young people to access.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people said they feel safe and one added, 'If I don't feel safe I will go to staff. When I get stressed I've got someone to talk to. Staff help you.' Young people are safe and feel safe living in this home. Staff have a good understanding of how to keep young people safe and what makes them feel safe. Staff follow the home's safeguarding procedures diligently.

The strong relationships between staff and young people means young people are open to listening to staff when they are agitated or upset. Staff know the young people well which ensures they understand what might be an issue for a young person and how to manage the behaviour effectively. This means staff rarely have to restrain a young person. They also give sanctions infrequently with a strong emphasis on ensuring young people feel secure, happy and cared for. Young people, therefore, build effective strategies for managing their own behaviour. Young people make exceptional progress in developing their emotional resilience and a positive self-view.

Staff have access to clear, robust risk assessment which enables them to reduce risks to young people. Risk assessments do not prevent young people participating in the activities they choose. For example, young people enjoy horse riding, rock climbing and a sky diving experience! Furthermore, young people are encouraged to progress their independence, for example, by making their own way via public transport to college. A social worker said, 'The progress made since he moved to this home is immeasurable. Independence has been encouraged after being over-protected by foster carers.' However, some young people are 18 or over. The impact of this on younger children has not been formally assessed to ensure their safety and well-being. Nevertheless, despite a diverse range of ages and needs in young people, they all appear to get on well together, like a family.

Young people do not go missing from this home. There are good procedures in place which are clearly understood by staff. The Registered Manager cited the reason for this in that young people 'feel loved and cared for.' Young people who previously engaged in risk taking behaviours such as self-harm and going missing prior to moving to this home are no longer involved in such damaging behaviour. Staff have created a secure and loving environment where young people feel like they belong.

Leadership and management

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

The home has a clear and comprehensive Statement of Purpose which is currently under review. However, it does not accurately reflect the service offered to children who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. This has had no impact on the service provided to young people who currently access the home. It is important, though, that this document provides an accurate picture of the service so that external professionals are clear about what the home offers.

Staff are highly skilled, qualified and knowledgeable which ensures young people make significant progress in their behavioural, emotional and mental well-being. The organisation clearly supports the professional development of its staff. There is an established diverse staff team who are well supported by each other and the management team. It is clear that staff love working in the home with the young people. The staff team undoubtedly have the best interests of the young people at heart.

The Registered Manager can effectively demonstrate a consistent and continuing capacity for improvement, communicating high expectations to staff and challenging weaknesses. For example they are currently developing, in conjunction with mental health workers, a communication strategy to ensure young people have access to the form of communication they understand. The Registered Manager has complied with all requirements made at the previous inspection. He ensures that young people and their safety remain at the centre of all practice.

The management team have robust monitoring systems which ensure a high quality service for young people. The Registered Manager ensures he and the staff are kept up to date with the latest developments in social care. He fully understands the strengths and weaknesses of the service and has a strong and effective development plan in place to address shortfalls and ensure continuous improvement to the service.

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 children's homes.