

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Denise Jolly
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home provides care and accommodation for up to three young people of either gender on a medium- to long-term basis. The home is run by a local authority that provides services to support young people with emotional and behavioural problems.

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**.

The children's home is making a positive difference to young people's lives. The commitment and quality of care provided by staff enables young people to make exceptionally good progress. Staff provide personalised and well-planned care that takes into account the individual needs and wishes of each young person. Social workers, and other professionals involved with the home, say staff promote positive outcomes for young people and are skilful in supporting them through difficult periods. Experienced and qualified staff offer structure and support to young people that values and celebrates their individual qualities and experiences.

Staff listen and respond well, as young people contribute their views and ideas about the quality of care in the home. They are fully involved in decisions about their lives and plans for their futures. Staff encourage cooperation in daily living and foster relationships based on acceptance of individual personalities.

Young people say they enjoy living at the home, and demonstrate improved outcomes in stability of placement, emotional resilience, family relationships and contact. Additionally, staff help them to reduce risk-taking behaviour, and increase engagement with education. Young people benefit from staff that work well with their families and relevant professionals to ensure they get the right support to meet their needs.

Young people say they feel safe in the home. Staff knowledge of how to safeguard children, and excellent care practice ensure they promote the welfare and safety of young people at all times. Staff demonstrate in-depth knowledge and understanding

of the risks young people face, and always take positive action to ensure risks are minimised and safely managed. Young people enjoy positive and trusting relationships with staff. This means they feel confident in the support available to them, and respond well to praise and encouragement given for their achievements.

Leadership and management of the children's home is robust. The qualified and experienced Registered Manager places a clear emphasis on providing a high standard of care for young people. Managers have a thorough understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home because of effective monitoring, including reports from visitors making checks on behalf of the provider. They are keen to address shortfalls and develop the service they provide in partnership with young people, to enable them to reach their full potential.

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Young people benefit from care that is personalised to their individual needs. Young people talk to staff and other professionals about their past difficulties and experiences, and develop an understanding of their backgrounds. This helps them to make effective and sustained progress because they feel secure, and are better able to overcome difficulties to achieve positive change in their outlook and prospects. They benefit from increased stability in placement, and invest in life at the home. One young person said, 'This is the best children's home I have ever lived in.'

Young people improve self-esteem and social behaviour, participate in cooperative living, and contribute to plans for their futures. They say staff help them to achieve their goals. For example, one young person said, 'They are working with me and my family, so that I can return to them.'

Young people understand the importance of healthy lifestyles. They enjoy a range of leisure activities that improve their physical and emotional wellbeing, such as playing at the skateboarding park with friends. They have prompt access to professional consultation and guidance on a range of health and social issues, including safe relationships, healthy eating and anger management. Generally, young people attend routine health appointments and with staff encouragement, and reduce their involvement in behaviour that damages their health, such as drug misuse. Most young people do not smoke, and this supports their healthy growth and development. When necessary, young people engage with specialised health professionals, such as mental health workers, to improve their ability to manage the impact of past trauma on their lives.

Young people are making very good progress with their education, in relation to their starting points. Young people respond well to staff encouragement and expectation, and for some this means they engage with formal learning after prolonged refusal. Young people benefit from support available to them when they are not happy at school, as staff promote their views in effective liaison with education professionals. As a result, they receive extensive professional tutoring while staff help them to

identify resolutions to difficulties, including finding a suitable school place. When young people identify alternative courses, such as apprenticeship schemes, they ask staff to support them in their applications, to enhance their chances of success.

Young people continue safe and positive contact with a range of family members, when it is beneficial to do so. When appropriate, young people welcome their families into the home, to share visits at mealtimes. When young people visit their families, they maintain regular contact with the children's home; , and this provides them with the support they need to experience successful and positive relationships with family members. When necessary, such as when parents are in hospital, young people receive enhanced support from staff, who sensitively facilitate contact arrangements. This enables young people to maintain and enjoy important relationships in their lives.

Young people develop skills that are building blocks to successful living, and help them to attain their goals for future independence. They work in partnership with staff to understand responsibility for making positive choices and effectively manage the challenges of daily living. Together with staff, they share routine domestic chores and experiences, such as cooking pizzas from scratch, tidying their rooms or digging the vegetable patch. Equally, they embark on adventurous trips to leisure parks and caravan holidays. Young people improve their knowledge and understanding of how to balance leisure and responsibility for active and productive lifestyles.

Quality of care

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

Young people thrive in an exceptionally warm and nurturing environment. Settled, qualified and experienced staff skilfully support young people to improve. Staff get to know the young people very well, and are fully committed to enabling them to understand and overcome their difficulties, and achieve positive outcomes. Staff demonstrate high levels of commitment, and persist in offering outstandingly creative quality of care to meet young people's complex and challenging needs.

Staff help young people contribute to their placement review meetings. They interact with greater confidence with a range of adults who support them, such as independent care review professionals and specialist health workers. Independent reviewing officers say they cannot praise highly enough the efforts staff make, to ensure the voice of each child is listened to in planning for their futures. A common description from all professionals spoken to is that the manager and staff 'go above and beyond' in their efforts to support young people. Social workers and independent visitors confirm that staff respect and value young people, and have exceedingly high aspirations for them. They provide young people with positive and constructive models of communicating views, and challenge behaviours that harm others.

Over time, young people gain insight and skills to enable them to manage relationships more effectively. Staff support young people to overcome difficulties they face at school or in the community. As a result, young people develop effective

problem-solving skills, refrain from criminal activity, and adopt safer patterns of behaviour such as returning to the home on time. Staff identify the importance of consistent approaches to setting boundaries for young people, and prefer to manage difficulties within the home. This fosters a sense of stability and security in young people, who thrive in the positive and constructive relationships they experience.

Young people contribute to the development of the home by sharing their views and ideas in regular house meetings and individual consultations. Together, staff and young people choose how to decorate the home, or buy equipment for the garden. The Registered Manager spends time with young people to ensure they communicate directly about matters of importance to them, such as family contact or safety concerns. Young people know how to complain, and staff respond effectively to matters raised by young people. This includes supporting young people to use formal complaints procedures when they are dissatisfied with proposed solutions arising from internal investigations. Young people remain confident they can complain without fear of reprisals, that they will be listened to, and that relationships will be sustained through difficult periods.

Staff plan young people's care very well. Staff use personal knowledge and consultation with young people and their significant others, to create an extremely detailed and comprehensive picture of individual needs and wishes. They identify individual support required to sustain the excellent progress young people are making.

When young people suffer setbacks to their progress, for example, by returning to previous patterns of behaviour, staff immediately alert all professionals to any difficulties. They spend time with young people to help them appreciate the concerns their behaviour raises. Together they review treatment plans, risk assessments and placement plans in order to identify the changes necessary to help get young people back on track. Social workers and other professionals say that staff persist with young people through extremely challenging times, to ensure consistency of care.

Young people live in a healthy environment that actively promotes their physical and emotional well-being. They have good access to community health services and are registered with a local doctor, dentist, and optician. Parents and social workers praise staff because they succeed in helping young people overcome anxiety or habits that has prevented them accessing medical advice in the past.

Staff closely monitor young people's well-being to ensure they are aware of and able to respond to any issues or concerns. They liaise well with mental health professionals who support young people in the home. Consequently, staff have an excellent understanding of young people's specific health needs and ensure these are met on a daily basis. They work very well with parents, to ensure they continue to be involved in their child's healthcare. This provides continuity of care during periods of change in young people's lives.

Staff ensure the daily routine supports young people's participation in education. Staff take an active interest in young people's learning. They support young people

by transporting them to school if necessary, and work collaboratively with education staff to ensure young people have the opportunity to achieve their academic potential.

When young people experience difficulties, such as exclusion from school, the manager works tirelessly to secure appropriate levels of home tuition, in order that young people continue to learn and develop. By placing a high priority on planning, the home identifies and proposes schools that they feel may better suit the needs of individual young people, and encourages them to attend in order to progress.

Staff encourage young people to plan their recreation time positively, and refresh interest in age-appropriate activities such as attending the local youth club, community sports activities or simply playing out with friends. School holiday activities include caravan trips with staff, and trips out to go karting centres or leisure parks.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

the dynamics of relationships between young people, and offer sound advice and education about issues such as bullying or appropriate relationships. A recent initiative has resulted in staff and young people being taught together about how to use the internet safely. Photographs show them equally engaged in the session, and able to support each other in their learning.

Staff present excellent role models in positive problem-solving techniques. They make good use of de-escalation approaches to deal with challenging behaviour constructively, and generally avoid the need for physical restraint. Young people recognise that staff use restraint only to ensure their welfare, and say they feel safe, on the rare occasion when it is used. Their views are appropriately registered in records of disciplinary action taken by staff. The Registered Manager acts promptly to address any learning need identified for staff arising from a review of physical interventions. Any concern raised by young people, as a result of restraint, is independently investigated. This enhances the safety and well-being of young people.

Leadership and management

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

The qualified and experienced Registered Manager leads a qualified and vibrant staff team that demonstrates a strong commitment to delivering a very high standard of childcare. Young people live in a home that places their needs central to any service development and celebrates the progress they make. Enthusiastic and competent staff have consistently high aspirations for young people, enjoy their company, and are proud of how well young people are doing. The effectiveness of this approach is

evident in the positive progress young people are making in many aspects of their lives. Parents and professionals say they hold the service in high regard, because they can see the positive difference the home makes to the lives of complex young people.

The home demonstrates continuing capacity to improve, by developments achieved in line with the published development plan. This includes, for example, specialised training to support the individual needs of young people, and regular access to mental health professionals to help young people improve their emotional health.

Staffing levels are sufficient to provide one-to-one care for young people, Managers increase staffing at specific times of need, such as when young people require additional support to enable an activity to take place, or to protect others. This improves opportunities for learning and development that supports improved outcomes in the lives of young people.

The home meets the aims and objectives of the Statement of Purpose. Young people, their families and social workers are clear about the services and support the home provides. The provider and manager effectively monitor the operation of the home, the quality of care and outcomes for young people, in partnership with young people, their families and the professionals who support them.

Visitors representing the provider present detailed reports about their impressions of the home, and the Registered Manager responds promptly to any recommendations to improve the service provided, incorporating detail into her own monthly targets for change. Paperwork used to capture the details of the lives of young people has improved to better chart their progress. For example, risk assessments are reviewed monthly, indicating improvements in each young person's ability to stay safe, and records of sanctions provide opportunities for staff to record when young people engage in restorative justice rather than accept a sanction. Results clearly demonstrate the positive impact and value that living at the home has had on the lives of young people, who grow in confidence and maturity.

Young people's written records are securely stored. Key workers maintain young people's records very well. Plans of care contain up-to-date information about young people, and include their views and those of others significant to them. The records provide a comprehensive picture of individual young people's experiences and inform plans for their future. If necessary, the home ensures young people have access to appropriate professionals, such as transition workers. This enables young people to participate in planning effectively for their future as young adults.

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.