

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Chris Scully
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This service provides residential accommodation for up to five looked after young people, all with complex emotional and behavioural needs. It provides care for young people between the ages of 12 and 17 years.

The home is owned by a private company.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service 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 home provides good outcomes for young people with good care planning. All aspects of care planning and practice are personalised and tailored to meet the individual needs of the young people. This is supported by staff's innate understanding of each young person's diverse needs. Staff work in a coordinated way with young people, their family and placing authorities. This ensures young people continue to receive the right help, guidance and support they need on a daily basis. Social workers are very complimentary about the care young people receive. They say the staff are 'committed to providing young people with a stable and nurturing environment.'

Young people have positive, trusting relationship with staff. This means young people feel very safe and secure in their care. They are confident to discuss issues with staff and this means they are able to work through any concerns or worries with them. Equality and diversity issues are generally positively addressed in both daily living and care planning. However, on rare occasions banter between staff and young people means they are do not always treat each other with the respect and dignity they deserve.

Staff and the Registered Manager are committed to providing good care and support to young people. Records and documentation are generally well maintained. However there are some shortfalls with regards to the monitoring of records in relation to young people's allergies, sanctions and some policies. Young people receive appropriate support when they are unwell. However, the storage, receiving

and disposal of some medication are not always appropriate. This does not impact upon the care provided to young people as there are effective procedures in place for the administration of medication.

Young people's views are taken into account and acted upon they know their rights in relation to their care. Young people feel confident that they can complain if things are not going well or as expected. Young people say, 'there is nothing the home can do better, they are good and care for us.' Young people say they feel safe here and have put forward their requests to remain at the home for the foreseeable future.

Areas for improvement

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
11 (2001)	ensure the home is conducted in a manner which respects the dignity of young people accommodated (Regulation 11 (2) (a))	06/06/2012
21 (2001)	ensure suitable arrangements are in place for the recording, safekeeping and disposal of medication. (Regulation 21 (1))	06/06/2012

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure the record of sanctions clearly identify the reason for the sanction, the outcome and effectiveness of this and young people are encouraged to have their views recorded in the record (NMS 3.18)
- ensure the manager regularly monitors in line with the regulations all records and policies to ensure compliance in particular young people's health care plans, the safeguarding policy and the behaviour management policy. (NMS 21.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people benefit from individualised support, which helps them to grow in confidence. They are making good progress in developing positive and realistic views of themselves and their emotional resilience. Social worker's say this is a 'fantastic placement' for young people. This is because the home effectively supports young people in exploring and developing their social and emotional development. Young

people have strong, trusting relationships with staff. This is because staff value their opinions and treat them as individuals. Young people say that staff help them to deal with difficult situations. Consequently, young people are more able to deal positively with the issues going on around them.

Young people enjoy healthy, nutritious meals that they help to plan during their young people's meetings. Menu planning effectively takes into account their individual preferences and trying new foods. Young people laugh as they explain to visitors that they would like to have more Caribbean food, as they like a specific restaurant. Young people are actively encouraged to assist with preparing meals and shopping in preparation for adulthood.

Young people are actively engaged in a wide range of sporting activities, which help keep them fit and healthy. Young people understand the importance of a healthy diet and how this can contribute to their overall fitness levels. Young people have detailed health care plans. These allow for the health needs of young people to be assessed, monitored and appropriate action to be taken. Young people take responsibility for their own health, such as engaging with smoking cessation groups. This has enabled them to reduce the number of cigarettes they have each day and to make informed choices about their health. Young people say the best thing about the home is the support they receive from staff. They say, 'it's quiet and safe and the staff take care of us and look after us all.' This demonstrates the staff's commitment to improving outcome for young people.

Young people are making good progress in their educational placements. Young people's preferences are taken into account and they have real opportunities to study in areas that interest them. Young people receive considerable support to help them succeed and achieve their personal goals. Young people benefit from staff attending all school events to support them. Their achievements are celebrated and acknowledged in recognition of their positive progress. Social worker's say 'young people's education is fully supported' by staff. Consequently young people are able to fully engage with their learning and gain purposeful qualifications.

Young people have access to computers so that can continue with their learning and sustain contact with friends and family. Young people maintain contact with families and friends, where appropriate. This helps young people to see their families regularly and sustain positive relationships with them. Staff make sure that the arrangements for contact promote and safeguard young people's welfare. Staff achieve this by working closely with young people and their families to ensure that contact is a positive experience for them.

All young people are engaged in a wide range of self chosen leisure activities. Young people are encouraged to continue with their chosen hobbies and interests, such as football, snooker, performing arts and motorbikes. They have opportunities to develop confidence in their skills, enjoy their leisure time and try new things such as quad biking. Social worker's say, 'young people have every opportunity to engage in leisure activities, which they have enjoyed. Staff ensure young people have the right equipment and are always encouraged to do their best.' Young people describe the

activities and support from staff as 'really good'. They say they enjoy going to watch football matches with staff and challenging them to games of snooker. This further develops their confidence, self-esteem and encourages independence skills.

Young people are being well prepared for adulthood. Pathway plans clearly identify each young person's individual needs and how these are to be supported and achieved. Young people are good at managing their finances and are currently in negotiations with staff to have driving lessons. Young people talk confidently about how they have been fully included in the plans for their future. Consequently, young people are instrumental in choosing where to live and they are planning for the move. Young people are keen to explain how they are purchasing items for their new home and how their cookery skills are improving. Young people feel positive about their future and while sad to be leaving are looking forward to new challenges.

Quality of care

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

Staff consistently ensure the welfare of young people is paramount. They are committed to enabling young people to overcome the difficulties they may face to lead happy and fulfilling lives. Young people's individual well-being is central to practice. Staff see young people in a positive and realistic light. Young people have positive relationships with the staff and talk fondly about their key workers. Young people say, 'everything is good here,' and that they have 'no problems.' They enjoy engaging in lively banter with staff. Young people explain how they have created nick-names for staff, which rhyme with the staff's name. Generally, the banter from staff is well meant, but on a very small number of occasions this can become inappropriate. This does not effectively contribute to the home's ethos of treating young people with respect and dignity.

Young people's placement plans are in keeping with plans identified by placing authority social workers. The plans provide a comprehensive picture of each young person's personal needs, the support required and the objectives young people and staff are working towards. Young people say they are fully included in creating their care plan. Care planning and day-to-day practice recognises young people as individuals with different needs, backgrounds, interests and views.

Young people acknowledge that staff know them well. They say, 'staff understand and communicate with us very well, we can always go speak to staff if we are unhappy about something.' Young people's needs and changes are reviewed regularly to make sure their needs continue to be met. This means young people benefit from access to the right services and help agencies to support them. Staff work closely with young people and others involved in their lives. This means young people are fully involved in their reviews, attend meetings and have their views listened to.

Young people know how to make a complaint and that staff will listen to them and take appropriate action to resolve any issues. Young people are aware that on some

occasions it may not be possible to act upon their wishes. However, they know that staff will support them and explain the reasons why it is not possible at that time. Social worker's comment that staff are 'very good advocates for young people, which means their voices are heard.'

Young people's health needs are identified and this helps to promote their good health. Young people are registered with the doctor, dentist and optician and other specialist services as required. Health care plans are set out in a meaningful way and identify their health care needs and how these are being met. However, occasionally written information is not as robust in relation to potential allergies. The impact of this is minimised as staff have a good understanding of these. Young people are aware of the services available to them, such as the child and adolescent mental health team, counselling services, alcohol and substance misuse teams. This means young people are able to make informed choices about their health and how to access additional support.

Staff are very clear about young people's health needs and ensure all young people receive their medication at the right time. The systems for administering medication are robust. This includes the accurate recording of any medication given. However, the storage, receiving and disposal of some medication are not sufficiently robust. This means on some occasions some sealed medication is stored in the office safe, until there is space in the medication cabinet. While this is a secure place it is not appropriate due to other items stored here. On one occasion an administrative error led to an incorrect amount of medication being received into the home. There are appropriate systems to dispose of medication that is no longer required. However, this is not always the case for medication which has been contaminated.

Staff have high aspirations for young people's education. Consequently, young people's educational needs are very well supported. All young people are currently involved in education and their attendance is good. The home's routines are designed to enable young people's education, such as making sure young people are up on time. Staff liaise well with educational establishments to ensure young people continue to do well at school. As a result of staff's commitment to young people's education, young people are making very good progress in relation to their starting points. Staff are very proud of young people's achievements, such as gaining a number of GCSE passes. Young people say, staff make sure they go to school and help them with their homework. Young people explain how they celebrate their achievements with staff, for example, going out for a meal with them. This effectively fosters young people's confidence and self-esteem.

Young people live in a comfortable family house in a quiet residential area that blends well into the neighbourhood. Young people enjoy spending time in the garden relaxing or playing football. The house is clean, decorated and furnished to a good standard. Young people feel very settled and have a strong sense of belonging. Young people have personalised the home to reflect their individual tastes. This includes choosing the décor and placing family photographs around the home.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are protected as staff have a sound understanding of the home's safeguarding procedures. This means they are able to take swift action should they have a concern about a young person. Positive relationships with social workers means staff are informed of any issues that may impact upon a young person's safety or well-being. Young people say they know they can talk to staff, or their social worker about any concerns and these will be acted upon. Appropriate systems are in place to investigate any allegations or suspicions of harm, to ensure they are handled fairly. Social worker's say 'staff work really hard to help young people feel safe here and to be more confident in themselves. They help young people understand how to protect themselves.'

Young people are occasionally missing from the home and these incidents are on a decline. Staff can quickly identify any potential issues and instigate the missing from care procedures. This is because they are very aware of each young person's vulnerabilities and these are reflected within their individual risk assessments. Young people keep staff well informed of their whereabouts and the time they are expected home. Consequently, young people are quickly located and return home safely. Staff talk to young people about the potential dangers of being missing, which helps keep them safe.

Young people learn to manage their behaviour and solve problems. This is achieved because they have clear, consistent boundaries. As a result they know what is expected of them and what is unacceptable. Young people receive praise and rewards when they do well. Sanctions and restraints are rarely used. This is due to staff's commitment to talking with young people and helping them to understand what socially acceptable levels of behaviour are. However, the sanctions record does not always demonstrate the effectiveness of the sanction and young people's comments are not consistently recorded. This does not fully support young people's ability to reflect upon their behaviour or consider how they may deal with challenging situations differently.

Young people live in a physically safe environment. Effective systems are in place to rectify any health and safety issues, such as repairs to the property. Young people are protected by a range of health and safety procedures, risk assessments and checks. Staff carry out regular health and safety checks, including fire drills, to ensure the premises are safe and young people know what to do in case of an emergency. Young people confidently tell visitors to the home how to evacuate the premises in an emergency and where to congregate.

The recruitment and selection is very thorough to make sure young people are protected. The management team carefully ensures staff have the skills and competencies to meet the needs of individual young people. Visitors are suitably checked and supervised to protect young people.

Leadership and management

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

The home is managed by an enthusiastic and competent Registered Manager. The organisation has a business plan to improve the service and the outcomes for young people. Staff feel supported by the Registered Manager and have a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities. Staff confirm support and guidance is always available and helpful. Regular one-to-one supervision monitors performance, accountability and identifies individual development needs.

The home has addressed the recommendation from the last inspection. As a result, all staff now hold an appropriate qualification or are working towards one. The home meets the aims and objectives in the Statement of Purpose. Young people receive a children's guide to the home. This provides them with useful information, including advice about how to seek external support if necessary, such as the Children's Rights Director. Young people have been instrumental in designing a musical version of the children's guide. This is a rap song and provides an alternative medium for young people new to the home to find out about the care and support provided.

Social workers confirm they are very pleased with the care provided and that staff go out of their way to support young people. Staff are effectively supported by the Registered Manager, consequently they have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They know who to contact should the Registered Manager not be available for support.

Young people are looked after by a staff team who have a wide range of skills and experience. These skills match the needs of young people living in the home well. A suitable training programme ensures staff maintain and improve their skills. The staff team provides positive male and female role models and reflects the cultural backgrounds of the young people. Young people are effectively supported due to the numbers of staff on duty. This includes the support they need for activities, visits and appointments.

The home's written records provide a clear picture of individual young people's needs, development and progress. Young people's records are organised and contain up-to-date information, including the relevant documents from placing authorities. Other documentation, policies and procedures are generally well maintained. However, there are some omissions within the safeguarding policy regarding contacting the local area designated officer (LADO) and behaviour management policy around permissible sanctions. However, this does not impact upon the care provided as staff are aware of when to contact the LADO and what are permissible sanctions.

The home has good systems to review the quality of care each month. The Registered Manager consistently monitors the running of the home and identifies areas for improvement. Action is taken to ensure the home meets young people's needs and promotes their welfare. The responsible individual for the organisation also visits the home every month to monitor how well young people are being cared

for. This means any shortfalls are quickly identified and rectified. There are appropriate systems in place to notify Ofsted of any significant issues with regards to the young people.

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.