

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Keith Riley
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The setting is one of two homes operated by the same private organisation. It accommodates six young people on a planned or emergency basis. The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for young people with emotional 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**.

Young people receive outstanding levels of care, support and guidance leading to making significant progress in improving their behaviour, education and personal development. Positive and meaningful relationships between staff and young people assist to improve feelings of poor self-esteem and self-worth. Staff are positive role models and provide a pillar of support enabling young people to express their difficult and challenging emotions in a calm, safe and trusting environment.

Extremely detailed and individualised care programs which are very well understood by staff are under constant review. This ensures the specific and changing needs of each young person are known and responded to extremely well. The views of young people are sought regularly and these significantly contribute to the safe and positive environment in the home. The safeguarding culture embedded in the home keeps young people as safe as possible while greatly reducing their risk-taking behaviours.

An extremely competent Registered Manager ensures the robust monitoring procedures which are in place are considered regularly, and in great detail, to inform practice. Although the number of incidents requiring physical intervention is extremely small, one minor shortfall was identified in the record keeping; this had no impact on the care of young people.

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 are always given the opportunity to be examined by a registered nurse or medical practitioner. (NMS 3.16)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Outcomes for young people are outstanding. Young people receive excellent levels of care and make considerable progress as a result, given their starting points on admission to the home. Highly individualised support helps them develop their life and social skills, gain confidence, improve self-esteem and their life chances. Young people form excellent attachments with staff and are able to express their difficult and challenging feelings in an environment in which they feel safe. Professionals say, 'This is not just a job to staff, they parent these young people' and young people are 'emotionally in a good place'.

The views and opinions of young people are continually considered and acted upon, for example in choice of bedroom or activity. The culture of the home is extremely young-person-centred with individual and group living needs being central to practice. Ideas of difference are positively promoted with young people enabled to appreciate and consider equality and diversity issues within a wholly inclusive environment. This generates a culture of respect and security. Young people reciprocate the respect and dignity afforded to them. Young people say the staff are, 'amazing', professionals say they are, 'brilliant'.

Young people are well supported to lead healthy lifestyles and have their health needs met. For example, there are lots of opportunities for exercise and outdoor activities. Healthy eating is consistently encouraged and young people have lots of opportunities for learning about healthy food. As a result there are excellent outcomes such as young people reaching their ideal weight.

Young people's psychological and emotional health needs are met. They have the best possible care and support through staff engaging with a variety of other professionals to ensure individual needs are being met. This includes a private counsellor who is readily available to the young people. Young people benefit from a close relationship with their key worker. They are able to share their intimate and painful emotions with someone they trust. Experienced and competent staff are understanding and empathetic toward the emotional needs of the young people in their care. As a result young people feel cared for, are positive about their future and self-destructive behaviour is no longer used as a coping mechanism. Parents say their child is 'in the best place ever' and 'challenging behaviours are significantly reduced'.

There is a holistic approach to developing independent living skills and close liaison with other professionals. An excellent contribution is made to pathway plans such as utilising the home's highly detailed and individual independent living plan. This increases the chances for young people towards being able to live independently. Young people, who have been at the home long-term, have successfully made this transition.

Education is seen as a priority in the home and young people have excellent support at school, college or through the home's own qualified tutors. Their achievement is exceptional taking into account their starting point at the time of placement. Education and support staff work closely together. This creates an ethos and culture in the home that helps to transform the attitude and approach of young people toward their education. Young people, who have previously disengaged from education, are now learning academic and practical life skills. Placing social workers say, 'The education really works for the young people, the staff give 100%'.

Children benefit from excellent levels of contact with their families and people who are important to them. Contact is fully facilitated by care staff, who support individuals to receive visitors or have home visits. This means that young people have a sense of identity and belonging.

Quality of care

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

The emphasis placed on identifying and supporting young people's holistic needs is outstanding. A comprehensive regular assessment process is in place to review the needs of young people against their initial care plan. This is an extremely valuable live document which clearly outlines all aspects of individual needs. This means that young people are supported with the most recent strategies according to their ongoing and changing needs in order to help them progress. Each young person's identity is valued and any specific needs, such as cultural needs or specific needs related to mild learning difficulties, are known and met to an excellent standard.

Education is highly valued and promoted in the home. There is an established culture that all young people attend school, college or engage in home tutoring. This is underpinned by a robust staff structure and a carefully planned personal education programme in place for each young person. This means there are exceptional attendance rates and excellent educational achievements given the starting point of each young person when they move in. Close liaison is maintained between the home and school which assists in providing agreed strategies for young people to engage in their education and learning, such as work experience.

The opportunities for exploring young people's emotional and psychological health are central to care planning processes. Young people enjoy excellent supportive relationships with staff that are based on effective communication and trust. They benefit from the consistent relationships that are in place between them and their key worker. They are able to share their difficult and challenging emotions in a safe

environment with someone they trust. This means they are able to develop their self-management competences and do not need to resort to self-destructive behaviours. Young people say, 'staff are caring ' and the care and support is 'very good'. Professionals say, 'There is stability and consistency, young people love staying in the home.'

Staff are unquestionably committed to de-escalation techniques when presented with challenging behaviours. As a result the potential for situations to escalate is minimised. Any incidents are analysed with possible triggers identified and positive corrective action taken, such as supporting young people to deal with their upsetting emotions or diversionary strategies. This means that the number of significant incidents requiring physical intervention is minimal. There have been three incidents since the last inspection.

Young people have considerable input into their statutory review. Their views are promoted and seen as central to running the home. They benefit from numerous opportunities, both formal and informal, to consult with members of staff and to voice their feelings and opinions. As a result, issues are resolved quickly without the need to access the formal complaints procedure. The complaints procedure is robust; any complaints from young people are taken very seriously. The Registered Manager takes swift and decisive action and young people are able to comment on the outcome. There has been one complaint since the last inspection.

Young people are learning to understand the nutritional value of eating a good diet. They also have an appreciation of different cultures and a range of international cuisine. Needs relating to young people's cultural background and personal identity are identified and positively addressed in both daily living and care planning. For example, young people are encouraged and supported to explore their ethnic background and their belief system.

Young people are able to personalise their bedrooms to a very high standard to reflect their hobbies and interests. This gives them a sense of identity and belonging. Young people also engage in the things that interest them outside the home such as football, swimming and cinema. The opportunities to participate in group activities, such as accessing an outdoor activity centre, are taken up with enthusiasm. This improves young people's social skills.

Staff have excellent knowledge in respect of young people's health needs. They arrange and facilitate contact with professionals as appropriate. Other routine health appointments are offered to the young people who make informed decisions about whether they wish to take advantage of the assistance and support offered. Young people benefit from carefully planned health care.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Overall there are excellent arrangements to safeguard young people. Effective management and adherence to robust policies ensure all are protected and supported. For example, extensive risk assessments are under regular review. Young people state they feel safe and secure at the setting. They say, 'They care for me'. Young people feel comfortable in talking to their key worker and other professionals involved in their lives. The culture embedded in the home ensures that the young people benefit from a robust and rigorous approach which treats the young people's emotional and physical safety as paramount. The Registered Manager ensures that all the relevant agencies are informed of any safeguarding issues. This ensures that strategies and plans can be developed in the event of any concerns being identified.

The challenging and risk-taking behaviours of young people are considered fully and comprehensively prior to admission to the home. There is an initial assessment period during which young people's safety is assessed further. This includes the risk of going missing. Careful consideration is given to the specialist services that are available, the skills to be developed and the diversionary activities that are available. Young people have every chance of success while being kept as safe as possible.

Protocols have been agreed with the local police in respect of instances where young people leave the home without permission. There is a clear distinction between unauthorised absence and going missing, carefully risk assessed for each individual. Staff work tirelessly to reduce such behaviours with young people who have a history of going missing. A comprehensive personal safety awareness module is used for each young person with individual reflection on past instances, prior to placement, when young people have put themselves at risk. Young people learn from their previous experiences. Work undertaken with young people who previously engaged in regular episodes of running away, has led to them significantly reducing the need to do so or eliminating this behaviour altogether. Consistent adherence to robust procedures and agreed strategies are followed in the event of young people leaving the home in an unplanned way. Staff shadow young people, visit known places they may go and stay in contact with the young people by telephone. This keeps them as safe as possible and communicates to them that they have somewhere they belong.

Risk assessments are regularly reviewed and updated where appropriate to ensure they continue to promote the well-being of young people. This ensures that all risks are managed and that the young people are assisted to take part in activities with acceptable levels of risk.

Staff are aware of the group dynamics and the effect any presenting behaviours have on others staying in the home. They are on hand to de-escalate any potential issues. Young people are provided with additional staff support, when they need it, to assist them in their behaviours and to safeguard all young people in the home.

Staff are trained in the home's behaviour management programme. There is a strong emphasis on de-escalation and distraction. Incidents are analysed so care plans and risk assessments are amended as necessary. The consistent feedback into practice means that the incidents requiring physical intervention are low level and occur infrequently. However, records do not clearly demonstrate that young people are

always offered independent medical advice after a physical restraint. This currently has no impact on the young people. Young people are involved in setting behaviour management incentive targets. They are rewarded when their objectives have been met for example through the use of monetary rewards. Sanctions imposed relate to the loss of privileges. The methods being used are proving effective in the management of young people's behaviour.

Rigorous recruitment procedures in line with the regulations ensure all checks are completed before a staff member is authorised to work in the home. This ensures that young people are cared for by appropriate adults with a full employment history.

Young people live in a safe environment that is well maintained. Regular health and safety checks ensure the standard is maintained. External agencies certify the safety of the environment such as the fire alarm system. Young people know how to evacuate in the event of an emergency.

Leadership and management

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

The home is managed to an outstanding level with a consistent and highly effective management team providing excellent leadership. Placing authorities comment most positively on the overall running of the home and the significant progress made by young people. The needs of young people are central to care practice, planning and development with all decisions focusing on their best interests, for example the provision of musical equipment and the formation of a band. The Registered Manager is vastly experienced and clearly understands the needs of young people and the support and guidance staff require to meet them. She is aware of the most up-to-date legislation and guidance. Staff morale is high. Young people benefit from a culture that is vibrant, energetic and centred around their needs.

The comprehensive training programme ensures all staff receive excellent training and development opportunities. Staff have the opportunity to specialise in particular subjects that interest them such as substance misuse or young offending. Young people benefit from an experienced and competent staff team who are deployed effectively to meet their individual needs. Staff are extremely positive about the management support they receive. This stems from the quality of the induction process through to ongoing formal and informal supervision arrangements. Young people receive care from a staff team who are themselves highly supported and enthusiastic about their roles.

An outstanding standard of report writing and record-keeping ensures the past, current and future needs of each young person are known, reviewed and planned for. All young people are enabled to participate in their reviews of care and to express their views easily. Extremely detailed reports are provided for statutory reviews with minutes of reviews being held on file. All documentation conveys an up-to-date and accurate picture of each young person's life in the home and the impact the care they receive is having on them. Such records are stored securely so

confidentiality is maintained.

The home offers care and accommodation for young people in line with its Statement of Purpose. The aims and objectives of the home are understood by authorities who place young people in the home. The Registered Manager regularly considers the running of the home to maintain excellent care levels. Internal monitoring arrangements are rigorous and visits by an independent visitor, who reports monthly on the service being delivered, are very effective. This means the quality of care that young people experience is under constant scrutiny and improvement.

Significant events are notified promptly to the appropriate authority. This means that incidents are dealt with appropriately and in consultation with other professionals. Young people benefit from living in a culture where the desire to adjust practice to improve outcomes is the norm.

The home's coherent philosophy, clear shared values and strong management combine to ensure that each young person is valued and nurtured to an outstanding standard.

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.