

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 **good**.

This is an effective service that positively impacts on the lives of young people who stay long term in the home. The emotional and psychological well-being of young people is central to practice. Young people living in this home receive an excellent standard of care and highly personalised support from a committed and caring staff team. Young people make significant progress, particularly when taking into account their starting points when they are admitted to the home.

This is a home where young people feel safe and secure. Robust safeguarding procedures and practice that are well understood by staff keep young people as safe as possible. Young people benefit from support tailored to meet their individual needs. Significant progress is made by young people in re-forming positive relationships with key individuals in their lives. Young people mature in this setting and work towards their future independence.

Education is viewed as a high priority in the home. Young people are fully supported to access school, college or the organisation's own tutors. Young people make excellent progress in relation to their starting points.

Effective management ensures that the home is monitored robustly and that practice is reviewed with a view to improving outcomes for young people. The management have clear plans in place to redecorate the home. The views, wishes and feelings of young people are actively sought on a daily basis.

Shortfalls have been identified in relation to placement planning and medication. Although most events that are required to be notified are sent to Ofsted, two events involving the police had not yet been sent in.

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
12A (2001)	agree and sign the plan for the child's placement prepared in accordance with the provisions in regulation 9 of the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 (Regulation 12A (1))	31/07/2013
30 (2001)	notify, if any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 5 takes place, the persons indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of the table. (Regulation 30 (1))	31/07/2013

Recommendations

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

- consider how children's safety and welfare are promoted, in particular the impact on a young person of any missed medication when a young person is absent from the home (NMS 4.1)
- ensure prescribed medication is given in accordance with the prescription (NMS 6.14)
- provide a comfortable and homely environment that is well maintained and decorated, in particular the planned redecoration is completed (NMS 10.3)
- initiate a review no more than 72 hours after any emergency admission to consider whether a child should remain at the home (NMS 11.7)
- ensure children understand, within their level of understanding, the purpose and content of their plan and the reasoning behind any decisions about their care. (NMS 25.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

In the main, outcomes for young people are good. Young people benefit from highly individualised support which helps them develop their life and social skills and make good progress. Their life experiences and confidence are enriched in a caring environment where they receive close support. Risk-taking behaviours, such as substance misuse and missing from care, are decreasing. A placing social worker commented: 'Going missing is not as bad as it has been previously.' Young people learn appropriate ways to manage their difficult and challenging emotions. Some young people who come with a history of offending show a reduction in the seriousness of offences. Others show a complete stop to offending behaviour. Some professionals say, 'All offending behaviour has stopped now.' Any anti-social behaviour is dealt with effectively in cooperation with the neighbours and the police.

Education is seen as a priority in the home and young people have excellent support at school, college or through a home tutor. Their achievement is good, taking into account their starting point at the time of placement. The ethos and culture in the home help to transform the attitude and approach of young people towards their education. Young people, who have previously disengaged from education, are now learning academic and practical life skills.

Young people benefit from keen attention to their health needs. They access specialist services to ensure they have the knowledge to make healthy life choices in relation to smoking, sexual health, sexual exploitation, drinking alcohol and taking drugs. Their emotional and psychological well-being is a high priority and specialist support in this area enables young people to build emotional resilience as they develop an awareness and understanding of their background.

Young people are able to plan and prepare their own meals, for example, when having a friend over for dinner. This enhances their social skills and increases their chances towards being able to live independently. Detailed pathway plans further the opportunities young people have to increase their life skills. Young people mature in this setting and demonstrate responsibility; for example, a statutory report states: 'The young person has blossomed in later months and is beginning to show maturity.'

Young people benefit from good levels of contact with their families and people who are important to them. Contact is fully facilitated by care staff, who support young people to receive visitors or have home visits. Young people speak positively of the significant improvement in relationships with individuals who are important to them. Making friends is actively supported and young people are able to have friends visit in the home or stay out for overnight visits.

Quality of care

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

The staff team is stable, motivated and committed. Young people are secure in the knowledge that staff are consistently available to support them through difficult times and celebrate their success and achievements when things go well. A

professional says, 'The placement is where the young person has engaged the most.'

Detailed placement plans guide staff in how to provide the best possible care. Staff clearly understand the individual needs of each young person and have high aspirations for each of them. Young people recognise that staff care about them and their welfare is most important. However, not all young people are aware of the content of their placement plan.

A staff team with a broad selection of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds ensures an excellent understanding of diversity issues, and staff work well with the young people in order for them to have a positive view of themselves and others, for example, by using self-reflection techniques.

Young people's views are promoted and seen as central to practice. They benefit from numerous opportunities, both formal and informal, to consult with members of staff and to voice their feelings, opinions and choices. For example, young people negotiated a new morning routine with staff to ensure they are ready for their education every day. Staff encourage young people to maximise their opportunity for their personal development. Young people with a history of poor education attendance show a significant improvement in their engagement with their learning.

There is a robust complaints system in place for any issues that cannot be resolved informally. Young people know how to access this and are able to comment on the outcome of any complaint they raise. There have been two complaints since the last inspection and young people state they are happy with the outcome.

Young people's social skills are fully supported. They engage in a range of stimulating and meaningful activities such as football, golf, ice-skating and swimming. Young people's self-esteem is greatly improved, for example, by the opportunity to participate in trials for local football teams.

Young people are able to choose and personalise their bedrooms to reflect their hobbies and interests. This gives them a sense of identity and belonging. The home is mainly decorated and furnished to a good standard which creates a pleasant homely environment. There are clear plans in place to continue the redecoration programme for those parts of the home not up to the same standard.

Young people benefit from carefully planned health care. Their emotional well-being is promoted to a good standard, with the staff arranging and facilitating contact with other professionals if appropriate. Other routine health appointments are offered to the young people, who take advantage of the assistance and support offered. Some young people take responsibility for their own appointments, such as going to the doctor. Although there is a robust system in place for the handling of medication this does not always ensure that young people who have organised their own appointments are taking the medication in accordance with the prescription. This has occurred on one occasion since the last inspection.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Staff receive regular safeguarding training. There is a robust procedure, that staff are fully aware of, in the event of a disclosure or an allegation. Issues are handled sensitively and appropriately. The manager ensures that all the relevant agencies are informed of any safeguarding issues. Effective professional relationships ensure that strategies and plans are developed in the event of any concerns being identified. This means that young people are fully supported and protected.

Individual risk assessments are in place that identify each young person's particular vulnerabilities and specific strategies to protect them and support them in understanding the consequences of risk-taking behaviour. The safety of young people has a high priority and is taken into account in all decisions relating to young people. Risk assessments are regularly reviewed and referrals made to external specialist agencies when necessary to ensure young people receive the support they require to assist them in making informed, positive lifestyle choices. Although risk assessments identify if a young person is on medication when missing from care, they do not fully address the potential impact of any missed medication doses.

Staff are acutely aware of the dangers that young people may face while they are missing out in the community and ensure that young people have an understanding of these. Staff are mindful that young people may be at risk of sexual exploitation and work with other professionals to keep young people as safe as possible. The manager challenges the professional judgement of others to ensure safeguards are put in place to minimise any risk to the young person's welfare. This includes an honest assessment as to whether the home can continue to keep the young person safe and, on one occasion, resulted in a discharge from the home to a secure unit.

Young people are encouraged to treat others with respect. Young people who live in the home for some time demonstrate a level of maturity and social awareness and are able to behave appropriately. They provide a role model for other residents. Staff promote positive behaviour through a reward and incentive scheme. This means there are effective strategies to manage issues such as verbal bullying.

Staff have appropriate training to carry out physical intervention if necessary. Such interventions are appropriate with detailed and accurate recording. An approach of using sanctions and restorative justice is in place to address negative behaviour. This means that the number of physical interventions is low.

Young people live in a home that is physically safe and appropriately secure. Health and safety certificates verify the safety of the environment. The privacy of young people is respected and information is confidentially handled.

Leadership and management

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

The home is managed effectively with a committed and motivated staff team placing the individual needs of young people at the centre of their practice and providing a high quality of care. All decisions focus on the best interests of young people. A professional commented:, 'The consistency and determination of staff enable young people to progress through difficult times and learn to trust.'

The manager is an experienced practitioner who provides good leadership. She demonstrates a clear understanding of the home's strengths and areas for improvement. A development plan is in place which clearly shows the plans to refurbish the environment. New systems are developed to monitor the outcomes for young people and to identify areas where increased support is required.

The organisation demonstrates a commitment to a wide range of staff training. Staff feel their training needs are met and they positively engage in the further training on offer, such as attachment theory. Staff apply their training wisely and can associate it with young people's support needs. Young people are cared for and supported by a competent and professional staff team.

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. However, a review does not always take place within statutory timeframes when a young person is admitted in an emergency. This means, on occasion, there is a delay in placement planning. The manager regularly considers the running of the home to maintain good care levels. There is a good working relationship with the independent visitor and any issues that are identified are resolved quickly.

The vast majority of significant events are notified promptly to the appropriate authority. However, two incidents, since the last inspection, involving calling the police to the home have not been notified to Ofsted. This has no direct impact on the young people. 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.

Records are clear and up to date and show what progress young people are making. They also give a good understanding of young people's history and current needs. The records demonstrate an on-going review of young people's needs and strategies to meet these needs. However, not all placement plans are signed and agreed with the placing social worker.

The previous recommendation to review the procedure for the involvement of police in the home has been comprehensively addressed so there is not unnecessary police involvement at the home.

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.