

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Michael Williams
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is privately owned and one of a number of children's services operated by the provider. The home is a six-bedroom detached house in its own grounds. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four young people, boys and girls, with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties and learning disabilities.

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**.

The home has a predominantly good Ofsted inspection history. At the time of this inspection, it was back on a good track after a number of significant events since the last inspection relating to the challenging behaviour of the young people accommodated. Any concerns about the home arising from these events have been resolved.

One young person commented that the care and support at the home is good. Another maintained that the home has always been good and that incidents in children's homes are to be expected. However, they acknowledged that the home was 'better' now than it had been at times since the last inspection.

Young people receive good support from staff. Placement planning and practice is very individualised to meet the personal needs of each young person. Staff have a good understanding of safe working practice; which they have effectively practised since the last inspection. Young people feel safe at the home and unsafe situations and behaviour since the last inspection have been well managed by staff in conjunction with other professionals and services. Appropriate boundaries and rules are set and are consistently followed. Interim leadership and management arrangements are good. The acting manager and the provider's operations director together effectively identify and address weaknesses to secure future improvement. Overall, young people make satisfactory progress across all aspects of their welfare and development. Outcomes for some young people would have been better if they had not refused to engage with health and educational services available to them,

despite strong encouragement from staff to do so.

An area for improvement is the educational resources available to young people when they are not attending school.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- develop children's access to a range of educational resources to promote their learning when they are not attending school. In particular, consider providing a better resourced education room and whether a dedicated specialist tutor is needed to promote children's learning. (NMS 8.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Outcomes for the four young people on the home's register at the time of this inspection have been varied and are adequate overall. One young person's latest looked after children review concluded that, 'The placement continues to meet his needs long after their admission.' Another young person's looked after children review expressed that they had, 'reacted well to the boundaries and rules set by the home following their recent admission.' A placing authority meeting regarding another young person agreed that, 'he has done well' at the home: He is socialising well, much more involved. He has voiced strongly what he wants.' However, what he wanted was to leave the home due to the disruption that another young person was causing. He had left at the time of this inspection. So had the young person who had been causing the disruption; they were being successfully looked after by staff away from the home while their placing authority found them a more suitable placement.

Young people are mostly developing a positive self-view, emotional resilience and knowledge and understanding of their background. Reasons for placement, emotional and behavioural development, and identity, cultural and religious needs each form part of young people's placement plans. These plans are individually monitored by young people's key workers so that progress is made with them. Where young people lack confidence and motivation outside of the home staff work to positively address this. Treating each person as an individual is a topic that staff frequently discuss with the young people, to challenge discrimination and promote equality and diversity.

Young people's physical, emotional and psychological health is mostly suitably promoted and they are able to access the services they need to meet their health needs. Young people's health needs are addressed in their placement and pathway plans and at their looked after children reviews to try and ensure they are being

met. Young people have access to a therapeutic service used by the provider to promote their emotional and psychological health. As part of their independence programme, one young person was starting to take responsibility for their own health, for example by making their doctor's appointments.

Young people know that their views, wishes and feelings, and those of others with an important relationship to them are suitably taken into account in all aspects of their care. Young people express their views both individually and collectively to staff who take them into account. The views of young people's parents and mentors are also taken into account in developing the home. Young people are encouraged to participate in any meetings about their care to ensure their views are heard.

Young people's educational attendance and achievement is satisfactory. The two young people at the home during this inspection were both in a period of transition with their education. One had recently left their mainstream school following their emergency admission, and their placing social worker was in the process of sourcing school work for them. The other young person was refusing to attend their special school after turning 16 years old and being accepted on a college course the following academic year. During this transition period both young people were mainly engaging in suitable educational and vocational activities with staff.

Young people mostly take part in age appropriate peer activities, both inside and outside the home, through which they make a positive contribution to their home and their wider community. As they were not going out to school, two young people at the home were mainly going out with staff to take part in educational and physical activities. The home had ended the placement of a young person who had repeatedly taken part in inappropriate activity in the local community.

Where appropriate young people have constructive contact with their family and friends. Young people's contact arrangements form part of the family and social relationships section of their placement plan so they can be promoted and supported by staff.

Young people are well prepared for adult life. Having turned 16 years old, one young person was successfully following their pathway plan and the home's independence programme.

Quality of care

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

Staff use individualised positive behaviour strategies to help young people enjoy good relationships with them and other young people. The home operates an effective incentive scheme with young people who have not moved on to an independence programme.

The running of the home and the delivery of young people's care is significantly influenced by their views, which they share during individual key working sessions,

meetings regarding their care and at residents' meetings. However, part of the home's development plan is to improve outcomes for young people by staff feeding back to them the actions from the previous residents' meeting. Staff say this is, 'ensure that young people know that we listen to them and value their input.' The home's acting manager had recently participated in a meeting with one young person's parent so that they could act upon some of their concerns.

Staff fully involve young people in the planning and review of their care, which they ensure is tailored to their individual needs and is focused on clear outcomes. Each young person has an up-to-date placement plan which they are asked to sign up to and is outcome focused. For example, each young person's placement plan identifies intervention and outcomes required in a number of key areas.

Staff actively promote young people's educational attendance and achievement. When they have encountered barriers to this, such as young people refusing to attend school, they have provided alternative educational provision in and out of the home. To facilitate this, a number of the staff are trained in an accredited education award scheme and the home has an education room. However, the education room does not have a wide range of educational resources and staff are not always able to dedicate themselves to promoting young people's learning.

Staff work positively with other agencies and professionals to try and secure positive outcomes for young people and to address significant events relating to their protection. For example, staff work with the police, agencies and professionals concerned with young people's education, health and safeguarding.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Staff actively and consistently promote the welfare of young people living in the home. As a result young people usually feel safe in the home and outside it. A young person newly admitted to the home strongly agreed that they felt safe at the home.

Young people's case records clearly identify risks and protective factors for them. To help protect them each young person has a risk assessment and behaviour management plan that is implemented in practice and reviewed monthly. It includes risk management strategies for any areas of risk identified.

Young people have gone missing since the last inspection. however they have returned quickly, have been protected as far as possible and have been responded to positively on their return. The home managed these instances in line with the protocols and procedures maintained by their local police. As a result, the local runaways coordinator liaised with the home and young people's placing social workers. A young person had not gone missing for over a month before this inspection.

Similarly, staff had not used physical restraint for over a month before this

inspection. There has been minimum use of restraint since the last inspection, and it had been used and recorded appropriately.

Staff have strong and proactive relationships with the local police and local safeguarding professionals to support and promote young people's safety. These relationships have been key to effectively resolving any concerns from significant events relating to the protection of young people since the last inspection. For example, a local police sergeant participated in a safeguarding strategy meeting regarding two young people at the home shortly before they both moved on from the home.

To help prevent unsuitable people from having the opportunity to harm young people there is exceptionally careful selection and vetting of all staff working with them in the home. Staff vetting is thoroughly carried out by a qualified human resources professional allied to the responsible individual for the home.

The home provides a suitable physical environment for the young people. Environmental checks required are up-to-date. However, young people's challenging behaviour since the last inspection had caused some damage to the home. As a result, the provider was in the process of completing a repairs schedule and a programme of redecoration and refurbishment. This will address a request made at the last residents' meeting: 'both young people would like new furniture and a new television'.

Leadership and management

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

Overall, this is a well-managed home with a clear, up-to-date Statement of Purpose which includes all required matters. The aims and objectives of the home and the services and facilities it provides are clear to staff, placing social workers and young people's parents. There is an accompanying guide to the home for young people.

Staff numbers, experience and support are such that they sufficiently meet the needs of the young people. The staff group, and their supervision, training and development, are included in the home's Statement of Purpose. A residential support worker vacancy is in the process of being suitably filled.

Since the last inspection, staff have participated in training to be able to continue to meet young people's needs, for example in terms of their health and safety. Staff have either attained, are undertaking or are due to start the relevant qualification at level three. Regular supervision and staff team meetings also support staff to provide a good quality service to the young people.

The provider has notified Ofsted about the absence of the home's Registered Manager and the interim arrangements for running the home. The acting manager and two senior practitioners have the skills, experience and qualifications to exercise effective leadership of the home's staff and operation, and to ensure the delivery of

good quality care that meets the individual needs of each young person at the home.

To secure future improvement, the home has taken all of the action its last inspection required and recommended.

Regular monitoring of the operation of the home effectively contributes to maintaining good quality care and promotes the welfare of the young people. Each month the acting manager reports on the matters required to be monitored by the Registered Manager. As the last inspection required, they will shortly be submitting to Ofsted a six monthly summary of these reports. In addition, monthly external monitoring is carried out by the registered provider visitor. The reports of these visits are focused on Every Child Matters outcomes for children and young people. They conclude with an action plan for any improvements needed to continue to develop the home, which the acting manager comments on and updates.

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.