

Inspection report for children's home

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Service information

Brief description of the service

A private organisation operates this children's home. It is registered to care for up to 3 young people, of both genders. The home cares for young people with emotional and 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**.

The young people receive a good standard of care and this means they commit to their placements, work hard, and learn how to take responsibility for their behaviour. Young people resident have lived at the home for what they consider to be a 'long time' and they clearly recognise this as their home where they feel safe.

Young people have embraced their learning and development opportunities. Young people continuously achieve and develop from the consistent support and approaches they receive from an experienced staff team. There have been few changes to the staff team between inspections. One parent commented, 'In the last 6 years we have never seen our daughter so happy, care free and working towards a future, long may it continue.'

Relationships between young people and with staff are excellent and each young person shows that they value difference. There are good safeguarding arrangements for residents through clear and agreed strategies, protocols, risk assessments and placement plans. Young people make better lifestyle choices. A range of professionals, agencies and parents provided positive comments and agreed that the service provides a good quality of care and this helps to keep young people safe.

Individuals living at the home are clear about their placement arrangements and show good commitment to their plans. Young people did display some negative behaviour following a new placement. Some successful strategies, including a placement change, were used to keep the group's dynamics stable and manageable at all times. Discussions with partners had a positive impact in ensuring suitable

safeguarding was afforded to each young person. Young people are making the right decisions about who they associate with in the wider community. Young people living at the home reflect on their behaviours and continue to develop self-knowledge and skills suited for their futures. The local police missing from home coordinator works especially closely with the young people at the home in supporting safeguarding. The home reports serious concerns transparently through notifications communicated to Ofsted.

Young people's efforts are rewarded and clear incentives help to change behaviours. Young people are cared for by an experienced, competent, and motivated team of staff. Not all staff have completed their level 3 training. The promotion of young people's health and well-being is managed well. Recreational interests are also supported well. Young people's commitment is clearly evident through their school and college achievements.

The young people are extremely relaxed within their home. The home's environment is supportive and underpinned by defined boundaries. Young people's views are consistently gathered and these influence the home's operation and future direction. Young people are involved in decision making that impacts on all aspects of their lives. Advocacy services are supporting one young person who had recently been advised of a possible change of placement. The home's aims and objectives are being fulfilled. This service has a positive impact on the lives of young people and improves their future prospects.

The views of partners are being gathered and these are used to shape future services. Monitoring reports carried out under the requirements of Regulation 33 and 34 provide some analysis and evaluation of events at the home. Information is not always provided within these reports to show what young people and staff are saying during these visits. Also, some of the actions that are identified as a result of these visits are not being addressed in a timely manner. Quality assurance checks on the whole do demonstrate the capacity to plan continuous improvements. The home has a development plan linked to staff training and a rolling programme of redecoration and refurbishment.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- continue to implement maintenance programmes linked to redecoration and refurbishment proposals (NMS 10.3)
- ensure more staff complete their level 3 training (NMS 18.5)
- ensure clear and effective procedures are in place for monitoring and controlling the activities of the home; specifically, improve the clarity of information within Regulation 33 and 34 reports, respond promptly, within the services defined

timescale, to issues identified that require an action to be taken; include more views from children and staff that can help to promote continuous improvement and development. (NMS 21.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people experience stable placements and make significant progress in many areas, including in their social presentation, self-awareness and taking responsibility for their behaviour. As a result, young people develop and mature. A parent commented, 'We have been to the placement over the last 6 months and it is exactly what our daughter wants.' The present residents confirm that they are all very happy living at the home and consider themselves to have made significant progress. This is particularly clear when young people talk about their future prospects as a result of their hard work and achievements in education. Young people have grown in confidence and recognise that the experience of living at the home has changed their lives. This is clearly evident in keeping young people safe.

Young people have a clear understanding of their plans and arrangements and all are capable of making responsible decisions. They cooperate with their plans and this results in them being in a very good position to fulfil their potential. Young people achieve personal goals and this helps them to develop a better understanding and appreciation of their personal circumstances. Young people can motivate themselves, especially to attend meetings where they express their views with some confidence. Each young person has clear aspirations and believe that they have secured a better future as a result of the time they have spent at the home.

Young people living at the home are treated fairly and staff practice supports their individual needs. There is a genuine affection and mutual respect between young people and staff. The young people gain tremendous benefits from the high levels of emotional support they receive from staff. There are occasions when young people do challenge boundaries but there has been a clear reduction in risk-taking behaviours.

Young people remain enthusiastic about their education and college placements. All work hard to complete their secondary school education and further education. Young people's willingness to participate has resulted in high attendance and good attainment. Each young person has grown in confidence through their range of learning experiences. Young people's progress and personal effectiveness had recently been acknowledged through nominations for a learning achievement award. An education trust commented, 'In conclusion the young person has been an excellent learner and her placement and course has proven to be a big success.'

Young people enjoy good health and mostly choose to adopt healthy lifestyles. They take responsibility for their health and make clear links between diet and exercise. Regular activities ensure they remain physically active. All young people are familiar with their health arrangements, are aware of the contents of their health plans and

attend their appointments with health professionals. Staff encourage engagement with mental health professionals. Young people understand key health risks associated with risk taking behaviours such as smoking, cannabis, drug and alcohol use as well as sexual health risks.

Young people gain many competencies and life skills through good quality experiences provided by in-house independence and social skills training programmes. Young people engage well with staff and start to build social resilience and life skills straight from the start of their placements from the good quality care they receive. Specific placement arrangements are introduced for older residents in line with their aftercare, pathway and transition plans. Young people's commitment to these plans successfully prepares them for the world of work and adult life.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy excellent relationships with staff which enable them to engage positively and make good choices, for example, keeping themselves safe and getting the best from their placement. Staff are skilled and show insight into and an understanding of young people's needs. As a result, young people appreciate and value the efforts of staff and work closely with them to plan their futures. Young people confirm that they like living at the home and agree that the rules are fair.

Quality assessment and planning takes place resulting in specific needs being met. Young people's progress is charted and recorded within placement plan evaluations. Social workers receive frequent progress updates. All achievements are celebrated and this continuously builds young people's self-esteem. An independent reviewing officer described staff as, 'Professional and engaging with the young people.' Young people's personalities prosper at this home.

Young people's views are consistently gathered and these influence the home's operation and future direction. Young people are involved in decision making that impacts on all aspects of their lives. They have been assisted to obtain the support of an independent advocate to help them in providing their views, wishes and feelings on a proposal to change their placement. A young person wishes to remain at the home in line with a well-focused placement plan. Young people continue to build their emotional resilience to the challenges they face.

Impact risk assessments have been used fairly successful in maintaining a compatible peer group dynamic. Positive relationships were maintained for the majority of time between inspections. Some successful strategies were implemented during a recent period of disruption when one young person failed to commit to the home. Prompt actions were taken to safeguard all the young people after a noticeable increase in missing from home. Staff work well in partnership with many different professionals and agencies to implement plans. Communication between staff, young people and their parents, social workers and other professionals is effective. The overall response being taken to support young people's needs is good.

All work is at the pace ideally suited to the individual child. Consistent practice eliminates any potential confusion about the arrangements in place for each young person.

Each young person's educational potential is supported by proactive staff practice. The home's philosophy of care successfully promotes the development of educational potential. Lots of positive feedback was received from education partners. Care staff continuously emphasise the importance of young people gaining the best education. Each young person has an education plan that works in practice. Individualised education planning is evident. Young people's cultural and heritage needs are being addressed through education and language programmes. The young people presently living at the home show that they are fully committed to their education and have impressive school and college attendance records.

Young people understand how to make a complaint. They confirm that complaints, if made, are responded to in full. A written guide covers complaints, with information, guidance and contact details of agencies such as Ofsted, children's rights and the Children's Rights Director. Young people can differentiate between grumbles and serious complaints. Young people have skills to sort out minor matters positively between themselves. This includes discussion or by raising matters during in-house meetings.

Healthy lifestyles are promoted. Staff deliver health promotion work alongside inputs from a looked after nurse. Medication is stored safely, and records are maintained on the administration of medication, including prescribed and non-prescription medication. There are clear policies and procedural guidance and these are followed in practice. All staff receive suitable training to support health and well-being and this maintains the quality of care being provided.

Staff engage young people in a range of activities to develop young people's individual potential. A good balance between organised activities and young people's free time supports their future independence. Young people have satisfactory resources within the home. Some ideas were expressed by the responsible individual on how the material standard of the home could be improved.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people confirm that they feel safe living at the home. They learn to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative and understand how they contribute to the home's operation. Young people develop skills that enable them to differentiate their behaviour according to the different settings and situations they find themselves in.

Young people say that bullying is not an issue of concern to them and confirm that staff do not tolerate any form of bullying. They have confidence that staff will respond to any bullying that may occur. There is very good interaction and sensible

discussion around difference, allowing members of the peer group to maintain a positive self-view. All young people understand the many forms that bullying can take and are equally clear about what to do if they have any concerns.

Well-coordinated safeguarding work supports children in making choices on how to lead their lives. Staff receive regular training to update their knowledge and have a good understanding of safeguarding policies, procedures and actions they should take when an incident arises; this allows young people to live in a safe and friendly environment. Young people have suitable safeguarding information and have learnt to make safer decisions about who they spend their time with. Policy and procedural guidance is consistent with that of the local safeguarding team's protocols. Relationships are established with the safeguarding Local Area Designated Officer. The home's Registered Manager provided a clear audit on all safeguarding matters from the home's records. A recent safeguarding meeting was attended by lots of partners and a decision was taken to change the placement of a young person. This action re-established suitable safeguards for all the young people living at the home. With negative influences removed there was an immediate reduction in young people being missing from home.

Systems for dealing with young people who go missing from home are well established and a protocol is set out. Risk assessments take account of a young person's potential to go missing. Reports made to local police are in line with the established protocol. Young people show that they can make positive lifestyle choices. The home's management attend meetings with the local police force's missing from home coordinator to review matters affecting the home. Management review all incidents. Young people have the opportunity to reflect on incidents they are involved in and this helps them to change behaviours. The local police confirm that effective safeguarding practice is consistently demonstrated.

There are no concerns relating to how the home manages the young people's behaviour. Young people respond well to praise and rewards and this lessens the need for disciplinary measures. Staff are clear that physical intervention is very much a last resort. All staff receive regular and refresher training in positive handling techniques. Comprehensive records are held on all interventions. Young people benefit from a permanent, experienced and stable staff team. There had been only one change to the staff team between inspections. Recruitment practice is robust, ensuring only suitable people work with young people. Equally good practice ensures the effective vetting of visitors to safeguard young people.

Health and safety issues are managed well, ensuring young people and staff remain safe. Regular servicing of equipment and routine safety checks maintain a safe environment. Young people know what to do in the case of an emergency and can exit the home safely. Staff implement a range of risk assessments to identify and minimise hazards. There is an audit of health and safety matters carried out on an annual basis.

Leadership and management

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

The Registered Manager works with the responsible authorities placing young people at the home to ensure effective sharing of information. Further enhancements have been made to the home's practice between inspections. There is a clear vision for how the home should operate and achieving positive outcomes remains central to all practice. Some training covering the Ofsted inspection framework, evaluation schedule and grade descriptors was provided and this helps to keep staff practice outcome focussed.

Young people develop meaningful and lasting attachments because of the supportive management culture and the hard work of the staff. Young people are gaining benefits from experiences provided by a competent staff team. It is a strong, child-focused service that is conducive to young people developing and maximising their potential. Clear partnership arrangements underpin all practice and there is tremendous satisfaction with the quality of services provided. Staff are responsive to the specific needs and specific circumstances affecting both young people and their families.

This service is managed by an experienced and qualified manager. All partners confirm communication is effective. Staff morale is excellent and energy levels high. Staff clearly 'go that extra mile' to provide the best possible experiences. Young people gain optimum benefits from a capable staff team. More staff need to complete their level 3 training.

The young people have full confidence in the staff and know who is responsible for them at all times of the day and night. Staffing levels are maintained. There is very little use of agency staff. Shift patterns ensure continuity with routines and procedures. The staff team is consistently supportive, attentive and sensitive to the care they provide for young people.

Records at this home show good clarity in how staff are managed. Staff confirm that supervision is taking place. There is access to training and a training attended overview record is maintained. Systems for staff's personal development and appraisals are established and this helps staff to further enhance their skills sets. Staff's performance is evaluated by the manager and individual objectives are set.

Practice is developed by a management team that is perceptive in identifying the home's strengths and the areas where it could perform better. A written and verbal self-assessment of the service was provided. All levels of staff influence and shape the service with their ideas and initiatives. Some creative working practices were outlined. The home's management team reflect on their practice and the home's operation. The views of the young people, staff, parents, social workers and independent reviewing officers are being captured by lots of different methods.

In contrast, there are few comments being captured from staff and young people within reports produced following visits to the home under the requirements of Regulations 33 and 34. There is some evaluation of records and events and this is

helping to develop services. The full impact and value that living at this home has had on young people's lives could be made clearer within these records. The timescales set out for action to be taken following these visits are not always met. Improving the clarity of information within these reports will help to demonstrate exactly where continuous improvement and development is occurring.

Young people's placements were stable at the time of the inspection. Requirements and recommendations set at the last inspection had ensured improvements took place with the plans for young people's education and all have had fantastic attendance. Young people's individual arrangements are a lot clearer within their placement plan. Staff show greater confidence in carrying out their respective roles and this means young people's specific needs are being met. Staff support established a good structure to each young person's routine. Rules and routines are being followed and there are less behaviour management concerns.

There is a system in place to notify persons and appropriate authorities of the occurrence of significant events. Five notifications were reported. No complaints were investigated by Ofsted between inspections. A record is maintained of internal complaints and this includes the action taken in resolving concerns, if they occur, with neighbours and the surrounding community.

Staff practice is supported by written guidance, policies and procedures. Information is written in plain English. The home's Statement of Purpose provides information in accordance with regulations. The ethos and culture established fulfils the service's aims and objectives and allows young people to build a great deal of resilience against the many challenges they face as they work towards securing a brighter future.

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.