

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Ann-Marie Born
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is registered to accommodate and care for no more than three young people. The home provides medium-to long-term residential care to young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Emergency placements can be facilitated dependant on the stability and mix of the young people in residence at the time. Work with young people is advised by a psychotherapist who also provides support to the staff team.

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**.

Young people make exceptional progress in a number of key areas, notably developing self-esteem and feelings of self-worth; education attendance; reducing challenging behaviours; reducing absences and keeping safe. Overall young people's welfare significantly improves which enables them to make progress in other areas. Young people are positive about their care, relationships with staff and feel well supported. One young person said 'I don't try to hurt myself anymore and I don't run away like I used to.'

Young people feel safe and good attention to safeguarding ensures they are safe. Young people particularly feel supported with contact arrangements and communication with important family members. A parent stated, 'I could sum them up in one word, fantastic.'

Consulting and forming agreements with young people is central to their individual care planning. This significantly improves young people's sense of belonging, worth and control of their lives. A social worker said, 'he actually calls it his home because he feels welcome, safe and gets on with staff.'

This is a good home overall. The manager understands the strengths and areas of further development needed and is working hard to address those. However, the judgements in the areas of safeguarding and leadership and management reflect the

areas to improve. These include the quality of staff recording after a restraint, capturing young people's views following their key work sessions and ensuring specialist training is available to staff where appropriate.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure that all young people communicate their views on all aspects of their care and support (NMS 1.3)
- ensure that staff are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of the young people and training keeps them up-to-date with professional and practice developments (NMS 18.1)
- ensure that entries in records are legible and clearly expressed, particularly following any episode of restraint.(NMS 22.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Young people make exceptional progress in all aspects of their lives. Young people recognise and are proud of their progress. This effectively improves self-esteem and positive feelings of self-worth. Strong, supportive staff sensitively enable young people to make sense of past life experiences thereby enabling them to develop a positive self-view. Consequently, young people do not engage in risk taking behaviours that could place them at harm or commit offences and develop the confidence to pursue their dreams. For example, participating in sport at competition level.

Young people feel valued, worthwhile and that they are individually important. This sense of belonging and interest enables young people, including those who have been looked after in a number of other settings, to settle and form sustainable attachments. Young people significantly reduce some presenting difficulties which impact upon their health and welfare. One young person stated, 'I managed to break down every other placement I had been in but I couldn't do that here' and a parent commented 'it is the happiest home I have known her living in.'

Excellent health care plans address all of young people's individual and holistic needs and how they are to be met. Young people are fully engaged with plans to promote their good health. As a result young people gain the confidence to engage with therapeutic services and how to live with chronic health conditions. These interventions reduce risk-taking behaviours and young people learn and understand the importance of healthy lifestyles.

Young people all attend either the company's educational facility or a local college. The home's staff liaise closely with education staff to ensure they are fully supportive of young people's education programme. Young people make significant progress as a result of their engagement in education activities. Their attainments are exceptional when measured against their starting points in both academic subjects and participation in inclusive extra-curricular activities. For example, participating in school assemblies. Consequently young people have aspiration to go on to further education and for their future career prospects.

Young people benefit from the excellent communication between the home and their family members. A social worker commented, 'communication with parents is much better than with any other professional because they trust the Registered Manager and the staff.' As a result young people are fully supported to understand their cultural heritage and how that impacts on their day-to-day lives while sustaining important relationships with significant family members. This effectively promotes a sense of belonging while building important support networks for their future. A parent commented, 'they are brilliant at contact arrangements.'

Strong care planning to identify young people's burgeoning independence and transition needs commence at the initial planning process and is a particular strength of the home. Young people benefit from individualised planning which provides them with space, support and encouragement to develop social and life skills. As a result young people are fully prepared for successfully moving on to foster placements or to live in semi-independence. For example, they are confident in planning, budgeting for and cooking meals and being responsible for their laundry.

Quality of care

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

The strong, committed staff team have consistently high aspirations for the young people in their care. They work strenuously to develop positive, constructive relationships with young people and provide opportunities for them to share their wishes and feelings. This effectively promotes self-esteem and feelings of self-worth. A young person stated, 'I see them as family now.'

Practice is exceptionally child-centred and personalised. The enthusiastic and nurturing staff team analyse each young person's needs and continually review the effectiveness of strategies. Outstanding action plans are developed and reviewed together with young people. The excellent support provided by key workers, encourages young people to work through difficulties and address the key areas in their plans. Young people are consulted, contribute fully to their plans and know what they are working towards. However, the outstanding work completed in key work sessions with young people is not being fully recognised by them as they are not routinely provided with opportunities to read or comment upon the written record.

Irrespective of the challenges they present, young people's well-being and individual

achievements are at the centre of all practice. As a result young people work towards achievable goals and their interests are fostered and built upon. This improves young people's confidence in their abilities and improves their self-esteem. One of the home's major strengths is the promotion of participation in inclusive activities, for example boxing and attendance at a local youth club. These provide young people with the opportunity for enriching new life experiences through which they gain confidence and build friendships. Young people receive positive recognition for their achievements as these are widely communicated and celebrated. A young person stated, 'I am so happy here partly because there is someone to talk to but also because there is always something to do.'

The management and staff are innovative and proactive. They develop strong working relationships with partner agencies. As a result, young people have access to an increased range of services and interventions and any shortfalls are challenged. For example, attendance at therapeutic appointments both within the organisation and community health provision. Young people thrive within the high quality holistic care these interventions provide.

Young people enjoy improved health and a healthy lifestyle as a result of positive role modelling by staff. The young people's weekly residents meeting and one-to-one sessions are used productively to promote regular health education and promote self-respect and self-esteem. Consequently, no young people in the house smoke cigarettes and they no longer automatically choose a takeaway for treat nights, as they enjoy healthy eating.

Needs relating to young people's cultural, religious and personal identities are comprehensively identified in care planning and actively addressed in day-to-day living. This successfully enhances young people's sense of belonging and trust in staff who care for them.

Young people enjoy living in a comfortable, well maintained home. They each have their own bedrooms which they personalise to their own taste. In addition they have use of community rooms allowing space for shared activities as well as personal time. The home is within walking distance of the beach, town centre and a range of social and leisure amenities.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people, their parents and professionals all report that they are and feel safe in the home. Young people are supported to learn how to keep themselves safe and understand about the risks and potential risks, behaviours and actions may lead to. Where particular risks are identified prompt communication takes place with social workers to consider appropriate responses. A social worker said, 'they have got much better to do with her safety.'

Excellent individual risk assessments ensure that young people's particular

vulnerabilities are understood. High staffing levels ensure that there are enough staff available to meet young people's needs and keep them safe. Experienced and committed members of staff spend a great deal of time talking through any identified concerns with young people. Young people are supported to develop an understanding of risk and the reasons adults are concerned. As a result young people feel cared for and protected and their risk-taking behaviours reduce.

Behaviour and 'respect' issues are regularly explored in the strong resident's meetings thereby reducing the potential for bullying behaviour and building self-esteem. Any bullying episodes are comprehensively addressed with both parties, safeguarding young people and providing them with the opportunity to learn negotiation skills.

Young people quickly settle and respond to boundaries which significantly reduces the likelihood of absences. Young people are further safeguarded by comprehensive procedures which are linked to locally agreed protocols ensuring staff would know what to do if there were to be missing episodes. A social worker commented, 'she is safe there. There were a few issues with her trying to abscond when she first moved in but she no longer tries to do that.'

Young people benefit from very good behaviour management plans which are individually developed together with them. These ensure that young people learn the benefits of positive behaviours and negative reactions decrease over time. The committed and enthusiastic staff team consistently model positive behaviours. Young people trust staff and respond to their interventions. Sanctions are fair, proportionate and audited for efficacy and lessons learnt. As a result young people learn from the consequences of their actions.

Staff are trained in the use of physical interventions. The majority of recording following restraints is comprehensive and audited for patterns and any concerns. However on occasion, recording of episodes does not accurately reflect the intervention. Young people are safeguarded as such interventions are also recorded in other logs and appropriate notifications made. Nevertheless potential safeguarding implications may not be identified if all recording is not clearly expressed.

Young people are safeguarded by the development and use of excellent recruitment procedures. All references and past employment are thoroughly checked and the human resources manager evidences all actions on the files. Young people are protected from being cared for by people who may pose a risk to them.

Young people's physical safety is assured by good health and safety procedures. Established systems are in place for the routine checking and servicing of all fire equipment and other appliances. Regular practice evacuations, including at night-time, ensure that young people know how to leave the building safely and quickly in case of an emergency.

Leadership and management

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

Young people benefit from the consistent and proactive care provided by the experienced Registered Manager and deputy manager. The manager is ambitious for young people to succeed in all areas of their lives. This dedicated enthusiasm is communicated to staff, thereby continually improving care, and is acknowledged by parents and professionals. A parent said, 'the manager calls me every week. I trust them.' Good arrangements exist for monitoring the quality of care and any concerns identified are swiftly addressed. Young people's progress is monitored from their starting points and the demonstrable improvements the home has made to their outcomes are identified. This effectively promotes and maintains high standards while contributing to young people's experience of being valued.

The home is operating in line with a comprehensive Statement of Purpose which outlines the aims and objectives of the company. As a result young people are appropriately placed increasing their well-being and opportunities for achievement. An informative children's guide is personalised for them and allows young people and their parents to have an understanding of the care they will receive.

High staffing levels and a consistent staff team ensure that young people are cared for by staff who know them well. The company does not use agency workers rather staff from other homes 'fill in' where necessary. This ensures that staff from all of the company's homes know the young people and benefits young people as they know the staff who will be caring for them. Although all staff are on the requisite professional training course in line with legislation, there are still less than half of the staff team qualified at this time. Nevertheless, all staff have completed the company's comprehensive induction course, including restraint and attachment training, ensuring they are equipped to meet young people's day-to-day needs. In addition, staff are supported by access to the company's in-house therapists, enabling them to further support young people with their emotional development. However, young people may present with issues that are outside of this arena and staff would benefit from having the specialist training to fully address those issues with young people.

Young people's well-being, sense of belonging and feelings of self-worth are enhanced by the outstanding care and attention they receive from the committed and enthusiastic staff team. Staff members report positively about the manager and company and that they receive strong peer and management support. A member of staff stated, 'it is a great place to work. I wouldn't have stayed all these years if I hadn't been happy here, if children hadn't been safe and if I didn't think we were still making that difference.'

Regular independent monitoring visits include gaining the views of young people and their parents. The manager actively monitors the quality of care as required. Information gathered by these processes is used positively to further benefit young people and inform the home's development plan. There were no recommendations or requirements made at the last inspection. Nevertheless, the home has maintained improvement. This is demonstrated by the re-decoration of the home and the

replacement of soft furnishings at the request and choice of young people.

The motivation of the manager, with the full support of the committed deputy manager, is driving forward the continuous improvement. This level of motivation ensures young people are provided with a safe, caring and stimulating environment where they feel valued and respected. As a result, young people develop and achieve in areas of physical and emotional well-being, improve their educational attainment and build necessary social and life skills.

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.