

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Clare Davies
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is registered to accommodate six children and young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties, currently all children are under the age of 12 years. The home is run by a private company that operates several other homes in the locality. The company has educational provision to support the children and young people in their care.

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**.

Children benefit from individualised care and support. Children have developed some good relationships with the manager and staff members, evidenced by the conversations and laughter. Collaborative working with schools, social care and health professionals have contributed to meeting the needs of children and promoting positive outcomes.

Children report that they feel safe and understand the measures taken by staff to ensure their safety and that of others. Children are encouraged to have their say and feel listened to as a group, and individually through regular key work sessions.

Children are encouraged to be creative and express themselves through play. This home provides a nurturing environment where children can be children, acknowledging the pressures and difficulties of their previous experiences.

The manager, and the organisation, understands the strengths of the service and areas for development. The high number of physical interventions has been identified prior to this inspection and action has taken place to address this area of behaviour management. One recommendation has been made in relation to the continued reduction of incidents involving physical intervention.

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 methods to de-escalate confrontations or potentially violent behaviour are used wherever appropriate to avoid the use of physical restraint. In particular, look at reducing the numbers of incidents of physical restraint. (NMS 3.13)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Children benefit from an enthusiastic staff team who are committed to providing good quality care. Children therefore, have a sound basis from which to develop and sustain attachments with staff who have an understanding of their background. The experience of these positive relationships enables children to develop emotional resilience and to make better sense of why they are currently living in residential care.

Staff recognise the importance of children keeping in touch with family, friends and significant people. Children are supported with visits, telephone contact and correspondence in accordance with their placement plan. Social workers report that the staff are very committed to ensuring contact arrangements are made in the best interests of the children.

Children enjoy good health. They keep fit and well, needing only routine appointments to ensure their dental, optical and physical health is maintained. Some children take medication as prescribed by medical professionals; this helps with their behaviour and children are fully informed as to how this will help them. Routines for personal hygiene and shopping for clothes contribute to the development of a positive self image.

Children are provided with a healthy diet and receive support in choosing a nutritious meal. This occurs through selecting menus, shopping for food and the opportunity to assist staff with preparing and cooking meals. Some children report that the house rule of spending only £1 of pocket money on sweets per week is a good idea, recognising how they are able to save for other things and eat less sweets.

Attendance at full-time education is very high for all the children. Their development and achievement is good in relation to their starting points, many have had a transition to new school this term. These moves have been effectively managed by the manager and staff team enabling children to settle well with minimal disruption to their learning.

Staff encourage children to pursue an interest outside of the home. This engages them in an activity and provides an opportunity to socialise with other children and

young people in the community, outside of the residential group. A child reported, 'the staff have helped me to join the clubs I like'. The staff are very supportive of such community engagement and also in providing activities within the home and in the local area. Games, construction kits, arts and craft materials are readily available in the home, this encourages children to play and express themselves through art and with toys. Another child reports, 'its so cool here, we get to do so many things'.

Children are taught the value of money. They are encouraged to save some of their pocket money and financial rewards to buy something special of their choice. The children take their savings to deposit in a local bank. This enables them to see the growth in their savings book. Children report a sense of achievement in being able to buy specific items with the money they have saved.

Due to their age and vulnerability the children are supervised when out in the community. Independence is an area considered within each care plan and subject to risk assessment. Staff ensure that children frequently go out to local parks, the seafront, sports facilities and the library. This level of activity keeps children fit and engaged in purposeful leisure interests.

Quality of care

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

Children benefit from good relationships with staff who provide warmth and consistency in meeting their needs. Staff manage situations well when there are disagreements and tensions of group living. This supports children with their understanding and tolerance of each other.

The manager and staff team are committed to providing consistency to the children, contributing to a secure and safe placement. The children play a significant role in the general running of the home. For example, they take an active part in the choice of menus and activities, including awareness of budget constraints. This helps develop life skills and helps them to understand why it may not be possible to act upon their wishes in all cases. In response to an idea from the children the manager has purchased a red letterbox that will be used internally as a suggestion box. The children have stated that only the manager should be able to access the suggestions. This action demonstrates to the children that the manager values their views and opinions, and encourages them to become further involved with consultation.

Children benefit from individual time with a key worker. These sessions focus on targets and support needs as outlined in their personalised care plans. The quality of these plans is very thorough with regular update and review. The care plans clearly demonstrate how identified needs can be met. For example, for any child struggling with socially acceptable behaviour, staff will engage in role play to show children how to respond in certain social situations. Similarly, cultural needs are identified to promote children's identity and an understanding of their family background.

Children are familiar with the complaints process and some have used it

appropriately when they have been the subject of bullying. A notice board provides information on how to deal with a complaint or bullying and the children say 'if staff see someone being bullied they stop it'. In addition to time spent with a key worker, there is an opportunity to meet with an independent visitor. This adult is not a member of the staff team enabling children to express any concerns they may have within the home to a trusted adult.

This home is committed to meeting the health needs of the children through collaborative working with community health agencies and the provision of therapy. This ensures the correct support is made available to contribute to the improved health and well-being of the children.

Children are supported to access education; the provider has schools nearby where children can attend if they do not have a place in mainstream education. Currently all children attend different schools. The home provides transport and escorts, ensuring consistency and staff will attend daily to support children in school if this supports the placement. There are daily handovers and regular meetings to track educational progress and identify any areas of concern. Children are very aware that staff and their teachers are in regular communication to support them in completing homework and sharing news of achievement as well as any difficulties.

The property is located in a residential setting, close to a shopping area and near to the seafront. Children are encouraged to engage with community groups and activities. The house is decorated to a reasonably good standard with a clear development plan. Children are involved in any changes to the home's decoration and furniture. There are several rooms on the ground floor to provide space for different activities such as construction toys, arts and craft and television.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The strength of relationships between children and staff contribute to open dialogue, supporting children through their anxieties and the impact on their behaviour. Children report that they feel safe, they are aware of some house rules and even though they sometimes dislike these rules they understand that they are in place for their own safety and that of others.

Staff receive regular training on the management of challenging behaviour and in safeguarding. As a result, they demonstrate a sound understanding of the action to take should they have any concerns about a child's safety or well-being. Since the last inspection there have been no incidents of children going missing and no police involvement at the home.

The one area of concern relates to the high number of incidents of physical intervention. Records are comprehensive and give a clear account of the event, the manager and senior staff within the organisation monitor and review these records to identify any patterns or trends. In response to the amount of incidents the home has

consulted with child psychologists and instructors on de-escalation techniques. This has led to a reduction in incidents and continues to be an area for close monitoring by the manager and the organisation. A placing authority raised their concerns about the number of physical interventions during a statutory review. The views of another social worker acknowledged the level of incidents alongside the complex needs of this child and reported 'They ensure he feels safe, staff always have time for him'.

Children respond well to the reward system of tokens that build up to a monetary value. Daily targets of personal skills and contributions to the home are rewarded. The tokens in a jar provide a visual incentive of the amount accrued as an alternative to a paper record. Verbal praise is routinely given, recognising individual achievements and strengths.

There are robust and thorough vetting procedures for the employment of new staff. This ensures that there are adequate safeguards for the protection of vulnerable children. Matters of health and safety, and fire detection and prevention are given serious attention. This is underpinned by policies, procedures and training that alert staff to their roles and levels of responsibility. As a result, children benefit from a safe environment.

Leadership and management

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

The home is effectively managed. The permanent and experienced manager has been in post since February 2012 and the staff report that she provides strong leadership. In a short period of time the manager has brought the team together, providing structure for the staff, the children and therefore the service as a whole. The manager is both approachable and supportive which is appreciated by staff, children and other professionals.

The staff team are trained and have good support through supervision and team meetings. Within the organisation there is a training department and key people with skills and expertise in education, health and safeguarding. This provides ready access to support and guidance as required by the manager and staff team, to benefit children. Staff are enthusiastic about their work and demonstrate a commitment to helping children in achieving good outcomes and beyond. They are afforded the time to reflect on practice and how to improve personally and as a team. There have been some new staff successfully inducted to the team and the staff complement means there has been no cause to employ agency staff. This ensures the children receive consistent care from a stable staff team.

The manager is keen to promote the service and strive for improvement through the use of a development plan. Where possible, children are involved in the development plan, particularly with the improvements to the environment. This level of consultation and involvement encourages children to invest in the home and respect it. Effective monitoring has led to the manager being fully aware of the strengths of the home and the areas to improve. A recommendation from the last inspection has

been satisfactorily addressed. This organisation is striving to improve and ensures that any issue highlighted for improvement is made known across all services; this ensures that best practice is disseminated.

Children's records provide them with an accurate picture of events, achievements and decisions made during their time at this home. Their views and opinions are recorded and records demonstrate the progress they have made during their placement. There have been no significant events to notify Ofsted of since the last inspection. Social workers report that communication is very good and written reports are received promptly.

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.