

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Chris Scully
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This is a children's home for up to three young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties or learning disabilities. The home is able to provide short- and long-term placements to young people and is managed by a private company.

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 is making a positive difference to children and young people's lives and provides them with the opportunities to achieve extremely positive outcomes. Children and young people are thriving in an exceptionally caring and supportive home environment, which enables them to make excellent progress. Children and young people enjoy exceptionally strong and trusting relationships with staff. They have a strong sense of safety and are protected from significant harm. Social workers are very complimentary about the home and comment upon the 'excellent' care and support provided and the home being 'one of the best' they have worked with.

Young people say they are confident to talk about any concerns or issues they may have and that they receive the right help and support. Young people feel empowered because they are able to put forward their views and wishes, such as deciding where to go on holiday. They are actively encouraged to have a say in the decisions that are being made about them and the running of the home.

Children and young people's needs are incredibly well met through highly personalised care planning. This means they are able to make excellent progress across all aspects of their welfare and development. This is supported by staff's innate understanding of each child's diverse needs. Staff work in a coordinated way with young people, their family, schools and placing authorities. This ensures they continue to receive the help, guidance and support they need on a daily basis. Young people say they are happy and while they look forward to moving into their own home are sad at the prospect of leaving here.

The home is well managed. Most records and documentation are generally well maintained; though there are some minor shortfalls with regards to health care plans, complaints and missing from care records. Systems for monitoring the quality and standard of care provided in the home are appropriate and provide guidance as to the areas for improvement. However, some records are not reviewed and the views of others, such as family members, are not always sought about the quality of care provided.

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
33 (2001)	ensure the person carrying out the visit shall interview with their consent and is private the young people, their parents, relatives, persons working in the home as appears necessary to form an opinion about the standard of care provided in the home and the record of complaints is inspected (Regulation 33 (4) (a) (b))	21/12/2012
24 (2001)	ensure a written record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response and the outcome of the investigation in particular they are sufficiently detailed. (Regulation 24 (5))	21/12/2012

Recommendations

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

- continue to encourage young people to exercise choice in the food that they eat and prepare, having particular regard for healthier options (NMS 2.4)
- ensure records and documents are clearly record and in a way which will be helpful to children in the future when they access files; in particular records contain the required information such as health care plans and young people are encouraged to add personal statements (NMS 22.5)
- ensure the written records kept by the home should a young person be missing details action taken by staff, the circumstances of their return, any reason given for not returning and the action taken in response to this, in particular there is a clear audit trail of events. (NMS 5.10)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Children and young people are making exceptional progress across all aspects of their lives. They make continuous and sustained improvement with regards to their health, emotional well-being and personal safety. Social workers comment upon the 'fantastic' support provided which enables young people to achieve their personal goals. Young people are growing in confidence, maturity, self-esteem and self-respect. They relish the opportunities to spend time on their own away from the home, which has significantly enhanced their self-esteem.

Young people benefit from strong, trusting, consistent relationships with staff. They feel secure enough to discuss their worries, express their feelings, wishes and views in constructive ways. Social workers say, 'this is an excellent home and one of the best I have ever worked with.' This is because of the positive difference they make to the lives of the young people. As a result young people are much more able to deal with issues around them in a positive and productive manner. For example, they take responsibility for themselves and show empathy and tolerance towards other people.

Young people are aware of their own health and the things around them that may impact upon this. They make informed choices about their health as a result of the excellent guidance they receive from staff. Despite the advice they receive on the dangers of smoking and using recreational drugs some young people choose to continue with some of these activities. However, staff and social workers report that this behaviour has significantly declined since residing here.

Young people are aware of other health services in the community, such as sexual health clinics, that they can access if they want to. They confidently make their own health care appointments and attend these independently. Young people usually enjoy a healthy diet. However recently as they are purchasing their own meals and snacks as part of their independence plan they are reverting to convenience foods which are not as healthy. Staff are continuing to provide support on healthier food options.

Young people are making very good progress in their educational placements. Some young people achieved excellent results in their GCSE examinations and are continuing their education in sixth form with the hope of attending university. Other young people are undertaking college courses on plastering and are according to their tutors are 'excelling'. Others continue to look for their niche with regards to their career prospects and are actively engaging with Connexions to assist them in this process. Young people are extremely confident about their future and the prospect of moving on, although they are very keen to point out that they do not really want to leave.

Young people are effectively prepared for adult life. They are making the most of the opportunities they have to: establish positive and appropriate social relationships;

develop positive self-esteem; prepare for the world of work; attend and succeed in education; develop practical skills, including shopping, cooking, washing clothes; understanding and taking responsibility for their own health care and developing financial skills. Social workers are very positive about the progress young people are making with regards to independence skills. They say staff are excellent at enabling young people to develop new skills.

Young people benefit from regular and appropriate contact with those people who are important to them. They enjoy the same social experiences as others of their age, including spending time with their friends. This means they are able to build and sustain positive relationships with those people who are important to them. They are fully supported, their welfare and well-being is of paramount importance. Consequently, contact is exceedingly well managed and is in their best interests, and young people are able to reconnect and sustain positive relationships with their family.

Quality of care

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

Children and young people receive exceptional individual guidance, care and support which make a positive difference to their lives. They are thriving as they live in a very stable, caring and supportive environment. This is echoed by social workers who commented upon the 'excellent progress' young people are making because of staff's commitment to them. They say staff are strong advocates for young people and are not afraid to speak out on their behalf. Staff provide consistency; as a result young people feel very settled and have a strong sense of belonging.

Young people are at the very heart of everything staff do. Their innate knowledge of the young people means they are always seen in a positive and realistic light. Staff are extremely interested in their lives and have consistently high aspirations for them. They are fully committed to helping them to lead happy and fulfilling lives. Young people feel valued and respected as staff listen to their wishes and views. Young people say that staff are really helping them to get things sorted with regards to moving on and always keep them informed about what is happening. They say they staff are always there for them and that everything is going well for them.

Young people's views are very important to staff. Regular house meetings facilitate young people's opportunities to have a say about things, including activities. Young people are fully aware that on some occasions staff may not be able to grant their wishes, but know that staff will always explain why. Young people feel valued because staff listen to them and take on board their requests.

Young people are fully included in their care planning and are confident to attend their review meetings. Placement plans provide a comprehensive picture of their personal needs. Care planning and routine practice demonstrate the uniqueness of each individual is known and understood. Staff work exceptionally well in partnership with social workers, families, schools and health care professionals to promote young

people's welfare. This means young people receive an individual service designed to meet their personal needs, cultural background and identity.

Young people live in a healthy environment that actively promotes their physical and emotional well-being. They are fully supported to develop healthy lifestyles. Staff closely monitor them to make sure they are healthy and encourage them to attend routine checks. Strong links are established with the specialist health services supporting young people. Young people confidently take more responsibility for their own health for example, where appropriate to self-administer their own medication.

Health care plans are in place and include all relevant information about the young people. Although on a small number of occasions the plans are not clear regarding allergies or other issues which may impact upon young people. However this is minimised due to staff's innate understanding of each young person's needs.

Staff have high aspirations for young people's educational achievements and future employment opportunities. They create a stimulating environment that effectively develops young people's confidence in their abilities and skills. Staff work effectively with other agencies to support and encourage young people's educational aspirations, such as looking at apprenticeships, colleges and university placements and this supports consistency in care. Young people enjoy the opportunities to spend time socialising with their friends and engaging in self-chosen activities. Some are revelling in their new found freedom and the ability to attend youth clubs and tennis clubs on their own. This has significantly enhanced their self-esteem and confidence.

Young people live in a very comfortable and homely family house in a residential neighbourhood. The house is decorated and furnished to a very good standard. Young people are fully involved in how the house is decorated. They are very pleased that they are able personalise their own rooms, which clearly reflect their individuality.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Staff consistently ensure the welfare of young people is paramount. They enable young people to overcome any difficulties they may face so they have an opportunity to lead happy and fulfilling lives. Young people are seen in a positive and realistic light. They live in a safe environment where they are protected from harm and have a strong sense of safety and well-being. Young people say they feel safe living in the home. They are aware of the house rules and think that they are fair.

Young people are protected because staff have a secure understanding of the home's safeguarding procedures. Staff are clear on the action to take should they have any concerns regarding a young person's safety or well-being. Staff are fully aware of each young person's vulnerabilities and risks when away from the home. They plan effectively to ensure young people remain safe here.

Young people occasionally go missing from the home. Staff are very aware of the young people's vulnerabilities and potential triggers for being missing. They work effectively with police, family members and other agencies to try and locate young people. Police missing from care co-ordinators and social workers say there has been a significant decline in the episodes of young people going missing. This is because of staff's proactive approach to resolving issues for young people. For example, by working in partnership with other agencies and increasing the number of overnight stays for young people. This has dramatically reduced the number of incidents of them being missing. Ultimately staff are more able to keep them safe. Police say the staff work well with them and as a result young people who do go missing return quickly and safely. However the records made when young people are missing do not always provide a clear picture of the events and the action taken by staff. This is a recording issue and does not impact upon the care provided to young people.

Young people understand how to make a complaint and know that staff will address their concerns. All complaints are fully investigated by the most appropriate person either internally or externally. A record of complaints is in place. However, the information lacks detail. This means the record does not fully reflect what has been investigated or said.

Young people have clear and consistent boundaries. Staff say the change in some young people's behaviour is 'remarkable'; they are much more able to tolerate rules and boundaries. Consequently, they are more able to manage their feelings and behaviours because they know what is expected of them and what is unacceptable. Incentive and rewards schemes work well as they are meaningful to young people for example, additional monies for clothes, games or beauty items. Staff are very good role models who provide clear, age appropriate explanations as to why specific behaviours are unacceptable. These discussions provide young people with the opportunity to reflect on their behaviour and consider different ways of handling difficult situations. Social workers say young people are much more able to handle challenging or difficult situations in a more constructive manner. They are confident to talk through their issues with staff and come to acceptable resolutions.

Staff carry out regular health and safety checks of the premises and obtain certifications for gas, electrical and fire safety checks. Staff ensure all visitors to the home are made aware of the fire evacuation procedure and where to evacuate to in an emergency. Young people are protected by a comprehensive range of health and safety procedures and risk assessments, which are consistently implemented in practice.

The recruitment and selection of people working at the home is thorough and protects young people from having contact with unsuitable people. Young people are also protected by the arrangements for vetting and supervising visitors. The manager ensures staff have the skills and competencies to meet the needs of each young person.

Leadership and management

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

The home is led by a very committed, enthusiastic and competent Registered Manager. Staff are well supported and have a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities. Through regular one-to-one supervision staff are held accountable for their performance and their individual development needs are identified.

Staff say they work very well as a team. The consistency of the staff team is a strength of the home as they are able to develop strong working relationships. This enables them to provide excellent support to young people and is also acknowledged by social workers. Regular opportunities to meet as a team provide opportunities for staff to consider young people's progress and modify any plans to ensure they remain current. Consequently they are able to continue to provide exceptional care to children.

The Statement of Purpose and young person's guide are shared with young people, their families and placing authorities. These are well written and provide a clear picture of the home's aims and objectives. This means placing authorities, young people and their families are well aware of the care and support young people can expect to receive.

The manager has taken positive action to address the two recommendations raised at the last inspection. The Registered Manager has now commenced the level five diploma in leadership and management and says this is going well. Reports of the Registered Manager's monitoring are sent to Ofsted twice a year as required by Ofsted. Overall, this has further enhanced the manager's skills and the monitoring of the home.

The Registered Manager has a clear and realistic understanding of the strengths of the setting and the areas for further development. The home demonstrates a capacity for sustained improvement based upon its performance over the last year. This is evident from the exceptional outcomes children and young people are achieving with regards to their independence and emotional resilience.

The home has sound systems to review the quality of care each month. The Registered Manager consistently monitors the running of the home and identifies areas for improvement. Action is taken to ensure the home meets the children's needs and promotes their welfare. The home is inspected monthly by another Registered Manager on behalf of the organisation. However, reports do not always evaluate the effectiveness of the records, including the complaints record, and the views of children, their families and staff are not always sought on the quality of care. The home is, therefore, unable to fully demonstrate how these have influenced proposed improvements and developments in the service.

Records and documentation are usually well maintained and provide insight into children and young people's time in the home. However on small number of occasions these do not contain all the required information, such as health care plans. Young people are very involved in the creation of their independent care plans,

targets and independence plans. However, they are not encouraged to take full ownership of these as they are unable to add their own personal statements reflecting on how well they think they are doing or the appropriateness of the plans.

Children and young people are cared for by a competent and highly committed staff team. Staff have a wide range of skills and experience which mean the needs of the children living at the home are met effectively. This is enhanced by their opportunities to attend a variety of training courses; for example on drug and alcohol awareness, safeguarding and child exploitation and online protection (CEOP).

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.