

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Julian Mason
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This is a privately owned children's home. The home accommodates up to four young people with emotional and/or 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 Registered Manager and staff team provide a welcoming, positive environment where young people are valued and respected. Young people receive outstanding individualised care that is tailored to their needs. They benefit from having a dedicated staff team who advocate strongly on their behalf and ensure they consistently receive the right support and care during their stay at the home. Staff are very well supported and trained in promoting and maintaining young people's safety and protection. Roles and responsibilities are clearly understood and staff know what to do if they are concerned about a young person's safety.

Young people feel safe, cared for and listened to. Relationships between staff and young people are positive, warm and supportive. Young people consider staff to be helpful and responsive in supporting and enabling them to reflect on their circumstances and plans for the future. Young people are successfully supported to behave well with little use of more formal measures of control such as sanctions or restraint.

Leadership and management are strong because the home adapts quickly to the changing needs and circumstances of each young person. The Registered Manager closely monitors the home's operation so any shortfalls can be tackled swiftly. Visiting professionals state that the social and emotional development of young people is very well supported and they are very positive about the work of the home. They consider that matters relating to equality and diversity are central to everything the home does.

Communication and consultation is a key strength of the team, which effectively

supports young people's positive progress. In addition, young people are fully supported to learn the skills they need in preparation for leaving the home and living independently.

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make good progress to develop a positive self view and confidence in their skills. They are supported and encouraged to understand their backgrounds and to develop and maintain positive relationships with staff, family members and peers. The staff group is stable and constant, providing good emotional support and sustained attachments. Staff want young people to do well in all areas of their lives and have a positive approach in support of this aim.

Staff are highly committed to promoting young people's education and learning during their stay at the home. Effective links are maintained with education establishments and associated professionals and these promote and support young people's attendance and progress. Young people receive individualised support that is matched to their personal education plans. This means that the arrangements and circumstances are very different for each young person. For example, some young people are being supported to prepare for their first year of GCSE study while other young people, who have just finished their exams, are planning to move on to college in September. Those who are about to leave the home and are at college have been supported to gain new college placements in areas that they are moving to.

Young people are provided with good support to maintain contact with their families, friends and significant others in their lives. Arrangements are negotiated and agreed sensitively with placing social workers and in consultation with young people. Staff provide the necessary support that enables young people to experience successful and fulfilling contact.

Young people benefit from opportunities to develop practical knowledge and life skills during their stay at the home. This supports the development of their independence and helps them become more self-reliant and responsible. Such skills include self-care, arranging appointments, shopping, preparing meals and using public transport. Continuous guidance and help, which is tailored to individual needs, promotes young people's confidence and self-esteem and effectively supports their preparation for independence.

Quality of care

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

Young people receive excellent standards of care and support because the staff team know young people well and value them as individuals. Staff create an environment where all young people are treated fairly and with equal concern. This inclusive

approach is achieved through the development of positive and constructive relationships between staff and young people. Staff set clear boundaries and have high expectations regarding young people's behaviour. This approach is part of the home's drive to ensure young people act responsibly and learn from their various life experiences.

Young people are fully involved in discussions about their care and also in planning for their future. Their views are actively sought in a variety of ways, giving young people choices about how they discuss their individual needs. Regular opportunities are provided to young people to contribute ideas and suggestions in relation to the running of the home. Young people feel listened to and changes are made because of this consultation or they are provided with an explanation when their ideas and suggestions are not taken up.

Staff ensure young people are fully aware of the ways they can raise any issues or concerns about their care. This includes talking to staff, managers, advocacy services or the representative from the organisation who carries out the monthly monitoring checks of the home. Young people have not felt it necessary to make any complaints but are confident that if they did, their concerns would be dealt with quickly and fairly.

Young people's diverse needs are positively explored and addressed from the time of their admission. A number of young people have complex family backgrounds and very different experiences of being in care. Staff use a range of information provided to them by the placing authority to help them learn about each young person. More importantly, staff listen to young people and what they have to say about their own life. For example, their family backgrounds and religion, their identity and culture, preferred routines, likes and dislikes. This helps staff to understand how young people want to be looked after in both their daily living arrangements and future care.

Strong links with local health care services effectively support individual young people and the work of the home. Where necessary, more specialist services are sought to meet the physical, emotional and psychological needs of young people. Staff are confident in discussing a range of wellbeing topics with young people and in supporting them to access local support services. Good records are maintained of health checks, treatment and outcomes so the manager can evaluate the health and wellbeing of each young person. Records of accidents and medication are well kept and regularly monitored to ensure consistent and safe practices are maintained in line with the home's procedures. Staff are trained in number of health related areas such as first aid and medication management which supports effective health care practices.

Young people are encouraged to eat a healthy and varied diet and they are able to prepare their own snacks and drinks at reasonable times. Some young people cook for themselves as part of an independent living programme. Staff coach and mentor each young person in relation to healthy eating and fitness and try to encourage good habits that will benefit them in the future.

Involvement in physical and social activities outside of the home is strongly encouraged and promoted. The use of community and leisure services is integral to the home's operation and a key factor in promoting and developing individual interests and hobbies. Young people also have opportunities to participate in shared activities and trips in support of their social development, relationships and inter-personal skills.

Young people like the home's layout and location. The home's locality provides good access to a range of local amenities, services and transport links. Some communal areas have been refurbished and improved with plans for further decoration and upgrades. Each young person has their own room, their privacy is respected and they are able to keep their possessions safe.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are looked after by a staff team that care about their safety and welfare. Young people feel safe in the home and with the adults who look after them. Individual plans contribute to keeping young people safe; these include assessments that help to inform staff of risks and what to do to protect each individual. Staff regularly talk to young people about their safety and they appreciate that their protection is important to the team.

Young people are successful at making changes to their behaviour because they are encouraged to manage difficult situations by thinking about the consequences of their actions. Few sanctions are given and physical intervention is rare. Each young person has an individualised plan that supports and rewards socially acceptable behaviour. Young people clearly know what is expected of them because their behaviour is being positively influenced by the staff team.

Staff are trained in safeguarding and are alert to indicators that young people may be at risk of harm. The Registered Manager has established good working relationships with community police officers and others working in the local area. Young people appreciate the individual care offered and incidents when they are missing from the home are infrequent. When these events do occur, the staff team use well established and effective procedures to gain young people's safe return to the home.

The home has good health and safety arrangements, with regular and routine checks being undertaken. Arrangements are in place to complete checks on any new staff members to ensure they are suitable to work with young people. The Registered Manager ensures that no new member of staff starts work in the home until all the necessary checks are completed and they are satisfactory.

Leadership and management

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

The Registered Manager and staff team work well together to promote good working practices and excellent individual care. The home is managed by an experienced and qualified Registered Manager who is very knowledgeable about each young person's needs and their aims and aspirations for the future. Staff are very well supported in their daily work and this makes a positive difference to young people's lives.

The home is managed and operated in a way that matches the aims and objectives set out in its Statement of Purpose. A separate guide is provided to young people containing details of what should be expected along with necessary contact information for outside agencies. Staff and placing social workers are clear about the aims and objectives of the home and young people are very familiar with the services available to them.

The home is effectively and efficiently run; well-established systems are used to monitor the home's performance and care of young people. Matters arising are actively addressed and shared across the team to ensure positive action is taken to improve and maintain high standards of care. The views of young people and significant others in their lives are valued and are used to develop the home's practice further. Staff regularly consult with young people through a variety of ways about their care, progress and the day-to-day running of the home.

Staffing is very constant and sufficient in number, experience and qualifications to support the work of the home. The team make up is diverse which also includes a wide range of different skills and experiences. Teamwork is exceptional, which consistently delivers reliable high quality care that is flexible and adaptable in responding to the changing needs and circumstances of each young person.

Staff receive very good management support, including regular supervision and annual appraisals to help guide them in their roles. A rolling programme of mandatory and refresher training is provided together with opportunities to access more specialist areas of learning such as life story work, child development and management training. These arrangements ensure young people continue to receive the care they need from informed and competent staff. Records are well maintained and securely stored and young people's case files fully reflect their development and progress.

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.