

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Katarina Djordjevic
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This privately operated home offers accommodation for up to four young people who may have 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**.

Young people receive a good level of care from a committed and skilled staff team. Young people really benefit from living at the home. They receive individualised care which helps them to grow and develop in a caring and nurturing environment. Young people are happy and feel safe living at the home and have good relationships with staff and each other. One young person referred to the staff as 'wicked'.

The Registered Manager is a very good role model for both young people and staff which helps to motivate them and make continued improvements. Since the last inspection significant improvements have been made in the quality of care provided.

Feedback from social workers and other professionals is very positive about the commitment of the staff team and the subsequent progress young people make given their starting points. One social worker said that the staff 'don't give up on the kids.'

One recommendation regarding additional staff training has been made to improve staff's understanding of how to meet young people's needs.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- provide staff with training on drug awareness and child sexual exploitation. (NMS 18)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people benefit from living at the home, making good progress given their starting points. Young people feel safe and their safety improves as their risk-taking behaviour reduces. Young people are proud of the progress they have made.

Some young people's attendance at school is good which improves their life opportunities. Many young people have not been in education for some time or their attendance has been poor prior to admission to the home. Young people who are reluctant to consistently engage in education are making some progress.

Young people's self-esteem and confidence increases. Young people feel valued and listened to and play an active part in decision making in the home. For example, they are consulted about food, activities, entertainment, and which staff they would like to be their keyworkers. They also play an active part in their reviews so they can influence decisions about their care and future.

Young people make good progress in changing their socially unacceptable behaviour. They learn to reflect on how their behaviours impact not only on them as individuals but on others. As a result, incidents of bullying behaviour have stopped and young people have learnt not to engage in play fighting. One young person said they are now able to reason with others.

Young people's health improves during their time at the home. They learn about healthy living and how to take responsibility for their own health when they have engaged in risk-taking behaviours. One independent reviewing officer commented on how the young person has grown since being at the home.

Quality of care

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

Young people receive a good standard of individualised care which takes into account their starting points, previous histories, experiences and identified risks. Young people's age, gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, culture and communication and language needs are also taken into account. This is possible due to good care plans, risk assessments and associated records which give clear details of the needs of young people and how to meet their needs.

Individualised care and the promotion of equality and diversity are embedded in the day-to-day practice at the home. Staff work hard to ensure young people are able to develop and retain their individual identity, which also includes ensuring they are able to follow their individual interests. Staff have been proactive in helping young

people learn about their family history and background. Young people have been supported to obtain photographs and start a family tree. This has given young people a better understanding of their current situation.

Education is seen as important at the home and is based on individual needs. Staff are strong advocates and work tirelessly to ensure young people access education provisions tailored around individual's needs, skills and interests. Although many young people are reluctant to engage in education, staff are tenacious and resourceful in their efforts to encourage young people to attend education. Staff work closely with placing authorities and education provisions to try and find ways of encouraging engagement in education. Comments received from young people's social workers and independent reviewing officers reflect the commitment of the staff team to improve young people's attendance in education.

Staff ensure young people's physical, emotional and psychological health and dietary needs are met. Staff work hard to try and enable young people to change behaviours which affect their health such as smoking and the use of alcohol and drugs. Young people are actively encouraged to access support services to help them stop smoking, using drugs and alcohol. Key work sessions are used to enable young people to learn about the effects of unhealthy living and also to take responsibility for their behaviours which may affect their health.

Young people's health is further improved by the provision of a healthy diet. Young people are consulted about the menus and really enjoy their meals. Young people commented that the housekeeper is 'the best cook ever' and that she gets their favourite things as treats such as favourite biscuits.

Young people receive excellent practical and emotional support to maintain contact and develop relationships with their families and friends where appropriate.

Staff are proactive in identifying resources and a range of opportunities based on each young person's needs and interests. Staff provide young people with new leisure activities and experiences which some young people may not normally have access to. Consequently, young people have enjoyable experiences while at the same time developing independence skills and becoming more confident.

Young people live in a home which is decorated, furnished and maintained to a good standard. Young people are involved in choosing the decor and making it 'their home'. The home reflects young people's personalities and interests with various photographs displayed around the house of activities they have been involved in and events important to them. Each young person is actively encouraged to personalise their bedroom.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Safeguarding is at the forefront of practice. Young people are able to develop skills

and take risks in a safe and nurturing environment in preparation for adulthood. They feel safe living at the home and make good progress in changing their risk-taking behaviours. This can be attributed to the effective implementation by staff of a range of safeguarding policies and procedures including child protection; behaviour management; missing from care; anti-bullying and health and safety. Staff are clear about their responsibilities in reporting any child protection concerns. Staffing levels and the existence of open and trusting relationships between staff and young people further protect and promote young people's well-being. Close working and regular communication with placing authorities and other professionals also help to monitor the care and safety provided to young people.

Young people know how to access the complaints procedure and they feel listened to. They are able to raise any concerns and worries they may have as well as having open and frank discussions about their needs and behaviours. This has really helped young people make significant changes in their behaviours, which has promoted their well-being and reduced the risk of harm.

Young people like and enjoy each other's company. Bullying is not an issue. One young person commented on how well they all get on and that it was a positive that they are all the same age.

Staff work hard to enable young people to develop more socially acceptable behaviours and as a result young people make good progress during their time at the home. This prepares them for adulthood and helps them to become accepted members of the wider community. Emphasis is placed on recognising and rewarding positive behaviour which helps young people feel valued and learn how to change their behaviours. Young people's behaviour improves because clear and consistent boundaries are in place and they understand the consequences of any negative behaviour. This progress is also confirmed by the young person's independent reviewing officer who commented that the young person is, 'noticeably calmer and able to reason rather than explode.'

Restraint is not used often which is testament to the skills of the staff team. Records of restraint are detailed and give clear information about what happened and the outcome. De-briefing sessions with young people and staff are held after an incident of restraint. This helps to ensure that young people understand what happened, identify any concerns arising from the incident and how to avoid another incident. Staff are also able to review the incident and identify any areas for improvement. This quality assurance tool helps to ensure young people are protected from the risk of harm while at the same time promoting positive behaviour. Additionally, it helps to identify any training needs.

Procedures and practices relating to young people going missing are robust and help to further protect young people from the risk of harm. Staff work closely with the police, placing authorities and other professional bodies such as child sexual exploitation teams to try and minimise the risk of harm to young people. Staff are proactive in instigating meetings with the relevant professionals to look at strategies to try and help young people to stop going missing.

The management of health and safety is good and helps to protect young people and staff from the risk of harm and injury. Young people know the fire procedures and confirmed they have regular fire drills.

Safe and rigorous recruitment practices help to ensure young people are protected from the risk of harm and abuse. Great importance is also placed on finding the right person for the job. This helps to ensure young people receive care from staff who are suitably experienced and staff who can work effectively with the existing team. Appropriate checks are carried out. Young people play an important role in the recruitment process; they form part of the second interview stage of candidates. This is excellent practice and really empowers young people and helps to make them feel valued.

Leadership and management

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

The Registered Manager is committed to improving the quality of lives of young people. At the last interim inspection in September 2012, the home was judged to have made inadequate progress. Ten requirements were made regarding: the provision of care; health and safety; behaviour management; recording of information; and the management of the home. A monitoring visit was undertaken in October 2012 which identified that there had been improvements in the management of the home. There are no outstanding requirements or recommendations from the previous inspection. This reflects the Registered Manager's and staff's commitment to improving the home.

The commitment of the Registered Manager to safeguard young people and improve the quality of life is evident in the management of complaints. A number of complaints have been made by young people since the last inspection. These complaints have been dealt with promptly and effectively. In some instances these have been referred to the person in the local authority responsible for safeguarding. Lessons learnt from these complaints have informed staff developmental needs which have helped to further protect young people from the risk of harm.

Furthermore, the Registered Manager has reviewed a range of systems and introduced new systems to improve the monitoring of staff practice and the care provided to young people. For example, the monthly monitoring checks she undertakes have been expanded to include other areas such as incidents and the number and effectiveness of incentives and rewards. The range of internal quality assurance systems are further complemented by the monthly visits carried out by a representative from the company. The Registered Manager responds promptly to any shortfalls identified during these monthly visits.

Young people receive a good level of care from a staff team who have high hopes and aspirations for young people. Staff are experienced, well trained and committed to improving the quality of lives of young people to enable them to reach their full

potential socially and academically. Young people are supported by a staff team which comprises a good mix of gender, age, and experience. As a result, young people learn about differences and they benefit from shared experiences. Staffing levels meet the needs of young people and are flexible.

There is a clear commitment to staff training and development which helps to ensure staff can meet the needs of young people. Staff training needs are identified through the robust monitoring of staff practices and in staff supervisions and appraisals. Staff receive all the mandatory training which includes: child protection; behaviour management; fire safety; first aid; food hygiene; and health and safety. However, staff have not received training on drug awareness and child sexual exploitation.

There is a system in place to notify appropriate authorities of all significant events relating to the protection of young people living at the home. This helps to further promote young people's well-being and protect them from harm.

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.