

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Philip Cass
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This privately owned children's home provides accommodation for three young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The provider organisation operates nationally, providing a range of care services for children and young people.

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 are safe and well cared for at this home. The well trained staff group display great resilience and skill in meeting the complex needs of young people. Positive behaviour management strategies are generally effective. Staff are well supported to understand the underlying causes of challenging and hostile behaviours. This enables them to provide care that is sensitive and empathetic.

A strength of the service is the ability of staff to build trusting relationships with young people. This promotes placement stability and enables young people to be confident that they have a stable future. Young people have significantly improved school attendance as a result of moving to the home. Because young people develop improved social skills, they are also better able to interact in the community. Young people are well supported to lead healthy lifestyles because they have access to a range of health care services that meet their physical, emotional and mental health needs.

The manager is determined to develop the service and ensure continual improvement. Staff feel well supported by annual appraisal of their performance and regular supervision. However, it is recommended that records of supervision are improved.

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 a written or electronic record is kept by the home detailing the time and date and length of each supervision held for each member of staff. (NMS 19.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people enjoy long-term placement stability. This enables them to build the trusting relationships essential to addressing the impact of early childhood experiences. Staff have developed effective tools to monitor the progress of young people. Because this information is shared with young people, they begin to understand the progress they make and how this impacts positively on their life chances.

Where young people have needs relating to their emotional health, they have good access to therapy services. Therapists talk positively about the progress young people make in managing their emotional responses and coping with the impact of previous life experiences. Young people become better able to form and sustain attachments. They gain increased emotional resilience. This means that they are better equipped to cope with challenging situations as they arise.

Young people are healthy. They make healthy choices, take part in regular exercise, and eat a balanced diet. Primary health care needs are addressed well. This ensures that minor ailments are treated appropriately and young people have improved dental health.

Young people become better able to engage in the community as a result of improved social skills. Over time, young people develop the skills to form and sustain appropriate friendships. Family contact arrangements are well understood by staff and fully adhered to. Consequently, young people are able to maintain links with support networks in their communities.

Staff are good at supporting young people to prepare for independence. Young people develop improved self-care skills. Where appropriate, they self-administer medication, manage their own finances, and carry out household tasks. Memory books are well used by staff to ensure that, when young people move on from the home, they are able to reflect positively on their experiences at the home.

Education attendance and achievement is significantly increased as a result of young people moving to the home. Young people learn to enjoy school and overcome entrenched patterns of non-attendance. Because young people do well at school they have significantly improved life chances.

Quality of care

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

Staff have good systems to assess the needs of young people. Clear strategies are developed to meet identified needs. Care planning is detailed and ensures that staff are given a good understanding of how to meet needs on a day-to-day basis. Young people contribute well to their own care plans because they are supported to record their opinions, preferences and objectives as guidance to staff. This means that the home positively involves young people in key decisions about their care. Care plans identify a range of individual needs. As a result, the home is good at promoting and celebrating diversity.

Key worker sessions are used to address objectives linked to the care plan and support young people to understand their background, culture, and sexuality. These sessions are also used well to support young people to manage their behaviour. Consequently, the behaviour of young people improves as they settle into the placement. A good range of stimulating and constructive activities enables young people to develop talents and learn new skills. Young people are encouraged to try new activities. This builds levels of self-confidence and enables young people to enjoy success.

Medication administration systems are generally safe and effective. Where minor shortfalls are identified, the manager is robust in addressing the concerns and taking steps to ensure that errors are not repeated. Where necessary, staff seek appropriate guidance from qualified health care professionals to ensure that medication processes are suitable.

The home is adequately decorated and furnished. Although the behaviours of young people can result in damage to the home, this is repaired quickly. As a result, young people benefit from a consistently homely, nurturing environment. Young people are able to personalise their own private space. Young people talk positively about how the home supports them to paint their own bedrooms with support from their family.

There is good communication between the home and school. This supports young people to overcome barriers to education that stem from emotional and behavioural difficulties. Because staff are good at celebrating educational achievement, young people are given great encouragement to do well at school.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Inspectors were aware during this inspection that serious allegations of a child protection nature were being investigated by the appropriate authorities. Actions taken by the setting in response to the incident were considered alongside the other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform inspectors' judgements.

Young people are safe in the home. As they progress through their long term

placements at the home, they are provided with a sense of personal safety and security through trusting relationships with core staff. Staff know what to do if they are worried that a young person has been mistreated. They are quick to report their concerns appropriately.

Safe recruitment processes reduce the risk that young people will be harmed by adults who care for them. The home carries out a range of checks to assess the suitability of care staff. These include the verification of records and a detailed review of Disclosure and Barring Service information. Where additional needs of young people mean that staffing is sourced through recruitment agencies, the manager is diligent in their efforts to ensure that agencies carry out robust vetting and pre-recruitment checks.

Young people very rarely go missing from home. This significantly reduces the likelihood of abuse and exploitation in the community. When young people do go missing staff make determined efforts to ensure that they are protected as far as possible, and responded to positively on their return.

Staff are very empathetic to the backgrounds and history of young people. Their focus on the underlying causes of challenging and disruptive behaviours ensures that behaviour is managed in a non-punitive manner. This enables young people to develop long-term strategies to manage their own behaviours. Where some young people require significant levels of physical intervention to manage the risk to themselves and others, staff have a clear understanding of best practice. This minimises the risk of injury or trauma to young people. Restorative justice approaches are well understood by staff. This reduces the risk of unnecessarily criminalising young people.

There are good health and safety procedures. All potential hazards are robustly assessed. Prompt action is taken to minimise identified risks. Fire safety systems are effective. The home has established links with local fire services to provide education to young people who do not fully understand the importance of fire safety. Safety is further enhanced by periodic testing of gas and electrical installations. The risk of injury is significantly reduced because staff are committed to safety.

Leadership and management

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

The competent and exceptionally dedicated manager has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. This means that she is effective in developing strategies to enable continual improvement. She is ambitious for the home and is good at communicating high expectations of success to the staff and young people. Staff report that high levels of support enable them to fulfil their roles effectively.

At the last inspection, two requirements and two recommendations were set. Because these have been fully addressed, the home has improved care planning

processes, and is better at sharing information with the regulatory body. Good development plans have driven improvements in a number of areas. Consequently, there is a reduction in the need for police involvement in the home, improved consultation processes, and better participation by young people.

Performance management systems are used well to promote high levels of attendance and good quality care. An annual assessment of staff performance is an effective tool to identify developmental opportunities for staff. All staff benefit from regular supervision. Staff report that they find supervision helpful. Supervision supports staff to identify strategies to meet the needs of young people. However, supervision records are not always well maintained. This may limit the effectiveness of monitoring and performance management systems.

Although there are some vacancies, the home works hard to recruit new staff to work at the home. The flexible and committed staff team ensure that staffing levels are appropriate to meet the needs of young people. New starters undertake the Children's Workforce Development Council's induction standards. Upon completion of their induction, staff undertake a recognised qualification in child care. This ensures that young people are cared for by suitably qualified persons. Staff are supported in their roles by a range of training. In addition to essential training, specialist training is provided to address the individual needs of young people. This includes training in restorative justice approaches, self-harm, behaviour management, and attachment disorders. Consequently, young people benefit from staff who have a good understanding of their needs.

Managers ensure that they comply fully with the Local Safeguarding Children Board's procedures. Because information is shared quickly and accurately, investigations into allegations or suspicions of harm can be carried out effectively. Managers respond to complaints promptly and are quick to identify opportunities to improve. Where complaints arise as a result of the behaviour of young people in the community, staff are good at supporting young people to take responsibility for their actions and make appropriate apologies.

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.