

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Mandy Williams
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is owned and operated by a private organisation. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to three children and young people. The young people may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties; including attachment disorder.

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**.

This is a very good home where young people say that they are happy and where they feel safe. Young people benefit from good routines; clear boundaries; consistency of care; and access to a range of activities in the community. Young people living here are making good progress both socially and educationally, despite their difficult past experiences. Staff are committed to improving the life chances of the young people and demonstrate a real commitment to the young people that they are caring for.

A particular strength of the home is the involvement of young people in its development. Many opportunities exist for young people to contribute to decision making on both a formal and informal basis. They are involved in decisions about their own care as well as in relation to any changes planned in the home. Staff appreciate that this is the young people's home and as such they should be involved in what is happening there.

Communication between the home with involved professionals and external organisations is good. Staff are good at updating others and also at sourcing appropriate support for young people if needed. The home demonstrates that it can work successfully alongside others, with the young person's interest being of primary importance.

The home is managed effectively. Staff demonstrate confidence in the manager, who is enthusiastic about the development of the home. He is keen to introduce new

ideas and initiatives to improve outcomes for young people living in the home.

This inspection resulted in four recommendations for improvement. These relate to the performance appraisal of the Registered Manager; clear identification of shift leaders; formal feedback to young people following a complaint; and the management monitoring of young people's progress.

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 children receive prompt feedback on any concerns or complaints raised and are kept informed of their progress; specifically formal feedback on the outcome of the complaint that is in line with the organisation's policy (NMS 1.6)
- ensure that all staff have their performance individually and formally appraised at least annually; specifically the appraisal of the Registered Manager (NMS 19.6)
- ensure that the manager regularly monitors all records kept by the home to ensure compliance with the home's policies, and to identify patterns and trends (NMS 21.2)
- ensure that the level of delegation and responsibility of the manager and staff, and the lines of accountability are clearly defined; specifically that staff are clear who is in charge of each shift and that this is clear on the home's staffing rota. (NMS 21.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people living in the home enjoy positive outcomes in relation to their health, education and emotional well-being. Young people have often had difficult early life experiences and inconsistencies in care, which have adversely impacted on them and their ability to make attachments. The staff focus on addressing these difficulties by providing a consistent but caring approach to young people. Consequently, young people are able to develop confidence and security as the adults caring for them respond in a predictable manner.

Young people are also able to access the organisation's therapists in order to address their emotional health needs. They develop an understanding of their past, as well as coping strategies for the future. All the young people keep a 'memory box' of items of importance to them that helps them to remember special times or those important to them. Young people may attend individual therapy sessions but regular consultation is also available for the staff team. This ensures that young people's

emotional health needs are addressed and that all those working with them are responding in a consistent manner and in the most appropriate way.

Young people's attendance and attainment in education is good. Some young people attend college in the community, while others attend the organisation's school. Staff are keen to encourage young people to have a work ethic and they have chosen college courses with a future career in mind. Young people have also been involved in volunteering at the local charity shop and have completed challenges to help raise money for charity. These activities encourage young people to have empathy with others; helps them develop the skills of working as part of a team; and helps in the development of socially acceptable behaviour.

Young people benefit from being able to maintain contact with those important to them. Contact arrangements are clearly outlined in young people's placement plans and these are adhered to. Social workers report that staff are good at facilitating this saying, 'Staff have gone the extra mile to ensure that the young person is able to have contact as planned.' Young people also develop and maintain friendships in the local community. Young people have their own mobile telephone which ensures that they are able to maintain these friendships similarly to any other teenager.

Young people have successfully moved on from the home. Young people living in the home receive effective preparation for independent living. While this is an anxiety provoking time for many young people; staff continue to encourage them to participate in a planned programme of preparation for independence. One social worker commented, 'X was appropriately prepared for moving on from the home. X would not have moved on as successfully as he has done without their support.'

Quality of care

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

Positive relationships are evident between staff and young people living in the home. Young people say that the best thing about living in the home is 'the staff'. Staff act as positive role models for young people setting clear expectations about acceptable behaviour. Some staff have worked in the home for many years and have established long term trusting relationships with young people. This is of particular significance for those young people that have experienced many changes of care giver in the past. Young people who have moved on from the home have also kept in touch with staff and the other young people, demonstrating that significant relationships were established during their time in the home.

Communication between staff and other professionals involved with young people is very good. Social workers report that they are kept fully informed about any incidents that do occur in the home and that they receive detailed monthly reports on the progress of the young person. At the conclusion of one young person's placement the social worker reported, 'This was a positive placement for X, who is often a difficult young person to manage. I could not fault the commitment shown by staff throughout X's time at the home.'

The views of young people are central to the running of the home. Staff seek the views of young people informally on a daily basis. In addition, more formalised young people's meetings are held on a weekly basis. Young people are able to discuss their activities and plans, as well as choose menus for the week ahead. Staff also use these meetings as an information sharing forum to update young people on pertinent issues and to seek their advice on issues such as the home's development plan or a potential new resident to the home. Young people receive a response from the Registered Manager in relation to any issues that they raise at these meetings. Young people in the home attend the organisation's children's forum where they are able to contribute to the development and priorities for the company. Young people are also involved in the production of a monthly newsletter for the home; in the regular appraisal of staff; and in the decoration of the home. These measures ensure that young people appreciate that their views are important and they feel involved in the development of their home.

Young people are aware of the process for making a complaint and the process is outlined clearly in the young person's guide to the home that they receive on admission. Young people have made complaints since the last inspection but these have been fully addressed and in a timely fashion. These have been fully addressed and in a timely fashion. However, although records have been maintained regarding these, it is not always clear that young people have been informed formally of the outcome.

Young people are cared for in line with their individualised placement plans, which receive a full review following each young person's statutory review meeting. This ensures that they are reviewed in line with changing priorities for the young person. Staff demonstrate familiarity with these and a process is in place to ensure that all those working with young people are aware of any changes made. This ensures that everyone provides the young person with a consistent response and are working towards shared objectives.

The administration of medication is approached safely by the staff. All staff are trained in the safe handling of medication and records demonstrate that sound procedures are followed and that young people receive their medication as prescribed. No concerns have arisen since the last inspection in relation to the administration of medication. Medication is stored securely in the home.

Young people live in a clean and healthy environment. The home is warm and comfortable and furnished to a high standard. Young people are able to personalise their bedrooms to reflect their personalities. Photographs of young people and their own artwork also adorn the walls in the home, reinforcing to them that they belong there.

Young people are able to access a range of activities in the local community. Staff ensure that young people are able to pursue a hobby or interest of their choosing. Currently, young people are involved in horse riding, the gym and attending youth clubs. Young people also have access to a range of traditional and electronic games

within the home. This ensures that the individual interests of young people are encouraged and their leisure time is filled constructively.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people confirm that they feel safe living in the home. All staff complete safeguarding training during their induction to the home and regular update training is also completed. Staff demonstrate familiarity with the organisation's own procedures and those of the local authority area where the home is situated. Consequently, staff are confident that they would be able to follow the correct procedures should the need arise.

Recruitment processes are thorough. Employees are suitably checked prior to commencing work in the home. The Registered Manager also refers appropriately any concerns or allegations that are made to other agencies with a safeguarding role such as the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). Staff are vigilant about only allowing individuals into the home when they have produced identification. They are also required to sign into the visitor's book. These measures ensure that young people are protected from those who may wish to cause them harm.

The ethos of the home is to promote positive behaviour rather than sanction poor behaviour. Rewards for good behaviour far exceed the number of sanctions imposed. Rewards are often just a small token of acknowledgement and staff have a 'lucky dip' box, where young people are able to choose an item from this. Young people have responded well to this approach. Any sanctions that are imposed are largely restorative in nature such as having to spend time to fix an item or directly related to the incident. For example, if a young person displays unsafe behaviours while sat in the front of the car, they would not be allowed to sit in the front for an agreed period of time. Young people say that generally sanctions are fair and reasonable. They are clear about the behaviour expected of them and the rules and boundaries of the home are clear. This helps young people learn about socially acceptable behaviours.

Staff in the home are trained in the use of a recognised method of restraint, should they need to implement this to prevent harm to the young person or others. However, incidents are rare and none have been required for a number of months. Staff are skilled at identifying potential triggers for young people and are able to implement strategies to divert their negative behaviours. Young people are also learning how to manage their aggression as they mature and appreciate that such responses will not be appropriate when living in the community.

Young people live in a physically safe environment as a range of safety checks are completed on equipment in the home on a regular basis. A range of environmental risk assessments are also in place. Fire drills take place routinely and in night-time conditions. This ensures that all reasonable precautions are taken and that those living and working in the home would be confident in the procedure to follow in the

event of an emergency.

Leadership and management

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

There is a suitably experienced and competent manager in the home, who is well respected by staff, young people and social workers. The home meets the aims of its Statement of Purpose, which has been recently revised, and forwarded to Ofsted as required. The children's guide to the home is an attractive and user-friendly document that clearly outlines for young people the standard of care that they should expect to receive in the home. The one recommendation from the last inspection that related to the administration of medication has successfully been met.

The home is appropriately resourced and employs a sufficient number of staff. The home benefits from some very long-standing employees. All staff spoken to said that they enjoy working in the home. Staff rotas confirm that staff have time scheduled to handover to staff coming on duty. This ensures that staff have the opportunity to update each other fully on young people's plans and any incidents of concern. Although, senior managers operate an on-call system should staff require advice in an emergency, the staffing rota in the home does not always indicate who is in charge of each shift.

Staff receive formal supervision on a monthly basis, from a consistent named supervisor. Staff also receive an annual performance appraisal, that young people contribute to. This allows staff the opportunity to reflect on their practice and define performance objectives for the future. However, the Registered Manager has not received an appraisal for over twelve months.

The formal internal and external monitoring of the home takes place as required and reports are forwarded to Ofsted routinely. The Registered Manager addresses any actions identified from the external monitoring in a timely fashion. However, some minor weaknesses were identified during the inspection in relation to incorrect dates and inconsistent names. These were quickly rectified. However, the monitoring of young people's progress was not sufficiently robust, as graphs demonstrating the occurrence of a range of incidents and behaviours had not been updated for some time. The failure to utilise full use of such tools makes it difficult to monitor and track young people's progress and the success of any new approach taken by staff.

A range of training opportunities are available for staff. The Registered Manager utilises the assistance of a training matrix to aid in the tracking of what training staff have undertaken and when refresher courses are due. The organisation is appreciative of the necessity to provide staff with the skills they require to undertake their role competently.

The Registered Manager has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home and has a development plan in place. He demonstrates a commitment to improving the home and is keen to consider suggestions for improvement made

by the staff team, young people, or professionals involved with the home. Regular feedback is requested from these individuals in order to improve the quality of the service.

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.