

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Trevor Hall
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is part of the provision operated by the local authority. This home provides care for up to two young people who 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**.

The home provides good outcomes and quality of care for the young people. Systems and practices reflect a clear and consistent focus on the needs and welfare of the young people and good ratios of staff provide effective care.

Care planning and day-to-day care is highly individualised and meets the specific needs of the young people in residence. Care plans and placement plans demonstrate detailed, robust and comprehensive planning for each young person's assessed needs.

Young people have good opportunities to engage with staff and they develop open and meaningful relationships with them. They benefit from an effective, fair and consistent behaviour management policy that is consistently applied. Young people's education is well organised, with them benefiting from the support and guidance from staff in both their attendance and their achievements.

The safeguarding of young people is good and this includes a reduction in behaviours that may place them at risk. This is supported by good health and safety systems. Young people know what is expected of them and feel settled because of this. There is strong leadership which results in young people being cared for by a motivated and professional staff team. There are effective arrangements for monitoring service delivery and this contributes to the high quality care that young people receive. Good records are maintained to support the work undertaken at the home.

One recommendation has been made following this inspection. This regards the need

to ensure that all staff receive formal supervision at the frequency indicated in the home's policies and procedures.

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 all staff have access to support and advice, and are provided with regular supervision by appropriately qualified and experienced staff (NMS 19.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people clearly benefit from the security and structure that exists within this home. Boundaries are consistent and help to give young people a feeling of security without denying them their individuality. They enjoy generally positive relationships with the staff group. These relationships are based upon mutual respect and positive regard; this helps the young people to build up their emotional resilience and improve their self-image

Young people make good progress in relation to their individual starting point. Young people learn to appreciate the significance of differing values and cultures and to have respect for other people because staff promote a positive ethos that fully embraces diversity and difference. Young people feel free to express their feelings and emotions, in a safe and nurturing environment. This promotes positive behaviours, assists young people to understand the consequences of their actions, and encourages alternative and more acceptable responses.

Young people enjoy a healthy lifestyle, take regular exercise and choose to eat healthy food options. New and different food options are regularly introduced to the home's menu to expand young people's food experience, nutritional knowledge and confidence.

Young people's attendance and educational attainment have both improved since their admission. There is clear evidence of them building on their existing knowledge and developing their skills. Young people develop a good work ethic and acquire the values they need to help them stay fully engaged in their education.

Young people freely express their feelings and emotions and are involved in all decisions that affect them or the running of the home. They are consulted about changes to the house rules, activities that are being planned, the home's menu and about reviews of their care planning arrangements.

Young people enjoy a good range of activities both in the home and out in the surrounding area. This gives young people opportunities to develop their social skills

and increase interactions with peers and the wider community.

Young people maintain helpful and close relationships with important people in their lives. Particular attention is given to planning and organising family contact, and staff listen to young people and family members in order to achieve arrangements that are appropriate and safe. This ensures that young people experience positive contact with their families, thus promoting a strong understanding of their backgrounds and a positive self-view.

Young people learn about personal responsibility and growing independence. The staff team is committed to providing young people with individualised support, focused on their personal development and individual circumstances. Staff prioritise the work they do with young people in terms of life skills and future plans.

Quality of care

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

Young people living at the home receive a consistent and good standard of care. Care planning is highly personalised and focused on the individual needs of each young person and is regularly reviewed and updated. Placement plans are very detailed and well organised. They form an integral part of supporting the young person's progress. Staff encourage and enable young people to express their views and to be involved in their care planning.

Young people enjoy positive and constructive relationships with caring supportive staff who have a good understanding of their needs. This encourages young people to express themselves positively and has enabled them to gain in self-confidence and benefit from their relationship with staff members.

Young people express their views more formally through established key working sessions with nominated staff members. Key worker sessions not only look at recent events, but also ensure that young people's cultural identity is being appropriately promoted and on any other issues identified in the young person's care plan. Where it has not been possible to implement a young person's request or ideas the reasons why are fully shared with the young person. This helps to promote meaningful relationships between the young people and the staff group based upon honest and open dialogue.

Young people have a voice and understand that they can influence the running of the home. They are aware that they can make complaints and representations and understand that staff take such matters seriously. The young people's guide provides details of how to complain; both internally and to appropriate external agencies. Details are also available on notice boards within the home.

Young people's education and health are well supported by staff members. Each young person benefits from attendance at routine check-ups and planned healthcare interventions. All staff are trained in first aid and medication administration. This is

supported by a robust system for the safe handling, administration, storage and disposal of medication. Health needs and healthy living are well promoted in the home by staff that understand the importance of appropriate lifestyle choices. Nutritious and healthy foods are prepared and staff encourage young people to help plan the menus and meals.

The staff team have high expectations for the young people they care for and place great importance on regular school attendance and on high attainment. Young people with records of previous poor attendance are supported to re-engage with education. Successes are celebrated, which improves individual self-confidence and personal self-esteem. Good communications with the educational establishments attended ensures that the young people receive the support they need, to make progress and achieve their potential.

Young people are encouraged to partake in a wide range of activities both in the home and in the local community. Young people have the opportunity to attend local clubs and youth groups as well as accessing local leisure and sports facilities. These activities are not only enjoyable but purposeful and have enabled the young people to develop their personal confidence and to socialise with a wider group of young people.

The home is well maintained and is furnished appropriately to meet the needs of the young people. Communal areas are clean tidy and functional, with little evidence of damage. Young people are encouraged to take appropriate ownership of 'their' home and to personalise their individual areas. The home enjoys good links to local facilities and is within easy reach of good transport links. The home also has a vehicle that means that young people have convenient transport for activities, shopping and contact visits with family.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people said they felt safe and well looked after at the home. They could identify a large number of people they would feel happy talking too if they had any problems or worries. Young people are protected from harm or abuse by robust policies and procedure which are adhered to in practice. The staff team receive regular training in safeguarding to ensure they are up to date with current practice and know what to do to protect young people from harm.

The home's individual care plans are supported by very good up-to-date behaviour management plans. These clearly identify young people individual vulnerabilities, behavioural triggers and provide staff with strategies to deal with identified behaviours. Staff have a very good understanding of the individual young people's needs and vulnerabilities. They take a positive approach to managing behaviour by celebrating young people's achievements and by implementing individual reward schemes.

Staff, guided by other relevant professionals, work hard to enable young people to moderate and improve their behaviour. There is an emphasis on recognising and rewarding positive behaviours, rather than purely punishing those behaviours identified as being unacceptable. This enables young people to develop more socially acceptable behaviour and better prepares them to interact positively with the wider community. Young people confirm that the use of sanctions is minimal, fair and consistent. Young people understand that the boundaries in place are there to ensure their safety. They are invited to sign all records relating to the use of sanctions, which helps them develop understanding and responsibility.

Young people and staff all confirm that physical intervention by staff is a measure of last resort, which is only used to keep everyone safe. Records clearly show that the number of incidents requiring physical intervention reduces as young people settle into their placements and develop meaningful relationships with the staff team. Only one intervention has taken place since the last inspection, the intervention was necessary, appropriately applied and well recorded.

The resolution of most incidents is through the skilful application of staff support and the sensitive use of conflict resolution techniques. Following each physical intervention, the home's manager, meets with young people and the staff involved, checks the home's record to ensure that the intervention was necessary, applied correctly and comprehensively recorded. The manager also ensures that young people are aware of their right to complain, receive any medical attention if required or requested and that social workers and, where appropriate, parents are informed. Bullying is not currently seen as an issue at the home by the staff or the young people.

Staff manage unauthorised absence extremely well. Established protocols and positive relationships with the local police complement practice. Tested responses are in place should young people go absent from the home or from an off-site excursion. Staff are aware of the potential reasons why young people may go missing and use this insight to assist young people in managing their feelings and frustrations in a more productive manner; this deters young people from running off and putting themselves at risk.

There are robust policies and procedures for staff recruitment which promote young people's safety and welfare. All new staff undergo an induction which covers safeguarding and requires the staff member to read the home's child protection policy. As a result, staff understand and follow safe working practices which protect young people. There is a wide range of measures for ensuring that young people live in a home that is physically safe and secure. This includes fire safety checks, fire drills and regular checks on appliances within the home.

Leadership and management

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

The home is well managed with good, consistent leadership and direction. All staff

are aware of their roles and responsibilities. Young people benefit from a well organised home where care staff are motivated and competent to support them. To provide support for the young people, staffing ratios are good and all staff shifts are effectively planned to ensure that young people's needs are met.

The home has a clear accessible and comprehensive Statement of Purpose and young person's guide giving young people, their families and placing authorities' comprehensive information about the services offered by the home. Social workers are clear about what the home seeks to provide and the services and facilities within the home.

Regular team meetings provide staff with excellent opportunities to discuss the needs of the young people and to be fully involved in the development of the service. Staff report that the manager provides good leadership and support; however, supervision has not always been maintained at the frequency stated in the home's supervision policy.

The home has a very good system for dealing effectively with young people's complaints. Young people confirmed their awareness of the home's complaints system and stated they would use it with confidence; however, no complaints have been received from any of the current residents.

The Registered Manager regularly undertakes internal quality assurance monitoring the home's records and operational systems. She regularly checks all reporting systems and comments if any record fails to meet either the home's policies and procedures or national regulations. Internal monitoring reports are produced which help the home to develop its practice and ensure that young people are receiving the care and support they need; these are shared periodically with Ofsted. Regular external monitoring is undertaken each month by senior staff accompanied by representatives of the local council this provides additional quality assurance and includes consultation with young people wherever possible. Reports generated from these visits are routinely shared with Ofsted and directly link into the home's development plan.

The home's monitoring systems also evidence improvements young people have achieved in their education and their day-to-day behaviour. Young people develop an improved sense of self-confidence and express their views and feelings without fear. Files are well organised and these documents contribute to young people's understanding of their life, experiences and plans for the future.

Staff say that training has enabled them to be more confident in their role and able to understand and meet the needs of the young people. Young people say that they can go to any staff members and that they receive good support or guidance.

All significant events relating to the protection of children accommodated in the home are notified by the registered person to the appropriate authorities, and appropriate action is taken following incidents.

Records are clear, up to date and stored securely, and would contribute significantly to the young people's understanding of their life in care, if they choose to access these documents.

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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.