

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Paul Scott
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This is one of a number of children's homes operated by a private company. The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to two young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service 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 **outstanding**.

The children's home is making a positive difference to young people's lives. The commitment and quality of care provided by staff enables young people to make exceptionally good progress. As a result young people are achieving some very good outcomes in relation to their confidence, emotional resilience, family relationships and contact, behaviour management, educational achievement and preparation for independence. Young people are positive about the care they receive and confirm they have made progress since arriving at the home.

Staff work with young people in a way that maximises their potential. Care planning and care practice is highly individualised and tailored to meet young people's specific needs. Staff work in a coordinated way with young people, their families and relevant professionals to ensure they get the right help, guidance and advice they need on a daily basis. Young people's views are central to the running of the home and they are fully involved in decisions affecting their lives.

Young people are kept safe and made to feel safe. Robust systems and excellent care practice ensure the welfare and safety of young people is promoted at all times. Staff show a good knowledge and understanding of the risks young people face and always take positive action to ensure risks are minimised and safely managed. Young people enjoy positive and trusting relationships with staff. This means they feel valued and well cared for.

The leadership and management of the children's home is strong. The manager places a strong emphasis on providing a high standard of care for young people to ensure continuous improvement and development. They understand what they do

well and are keen to address shortfalls and develop the service they provide, and support young people to make progress and achieve their potential.

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people benefit from well planned care which is personalised to their individual and specific needs. Staff provide good opportunities for young people to gain an understanding of their lives and overcome the difficulties they have faced. They talk to young people about their past. This means young people develop an understanding of their backgrounds leading to increased confidence and emotionally security. This has helped them make exceptional progress because they feel secure and are better able to tackle the challenges they face to leading a happy and fulfilling life.

Young people understand the importance of healthy lifestyles and generally take responsibility for their own health. They attend routine check-ups and will request access to specialist help when required. Staff provide young people with good information, advice and guidance on a range of health and social issues including sexual health, relationships and the dangers of smoking and alcohol and substance misuse. This has enabled young people to make informed choices about their lifestyles and on the whole refrain from risk taking behaviour.

Young people are making very good progress with their education. School attendance has significantly improved and young people have made exceptional progress with their studies in a relatively short period of time. One young person said, 'I had not been in school for about 3 years before coming here. I don't like school but I know it is important and I have done well since coming here.'

Very well organised and safe arrangements are in place for young people to have contact with their families. Staff support young people both emotionally and practically to ensure contact is as positive an experience as possible. They work hard with young people to enable them to develop and sustain relationships with important people in their lives. As a result, young people enjoy frequent and good quality contact with the key people in their lives.

Young people are being very well prepared to become more independent appropriate to their age, ability and level of understanding. They are encouraged to take more responsibility for themselves and develop the necessary life skills to prepare them for adult life. They are routinely involved in the running of the home, including shopping, cooking, doing the laundry and using money. The home has effectively supported young people to move on to semi-independent living. They have worked proactively with individual young people and other professionals to ensure they make a successful transition to their new home. Staff have continued to maintain appropriate links with young people after they have left. For example, young people regularly return to the home for tea. This has provided young people with continuous support to ensure they are able to deal with the challenges of leaving home.

Quality of care

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

Young people are living in a stable and supportive environment. They benefit from being cared for by staff who have an excellent understanding of their individual needs. Staff are fully committed to enabling them to understand and overcome their difficulties and achieve positive outcomes.

Staff are extremely effective at getting to know young people and developing strong and trusting relationships. They use these relationships well to encourage young people to behave in a socially acceptable manner. They challenge inappropriate behaviour using discussion and compromise which means disagreements and disputes are generally settled quickly and amicably.

Young people are encouraged to express their views and contribute to the day-to-day running of the home. A number of formal and informal consultation systems are in place to ensure young people's views and wishes are sought and action is taken to support any reasonable request. For example, young people are invited to attend and contribute to staff meetings. Young people know how to complain because they are provided with good information and staff regularly talk to them about how to make a complaint, not only in the home but in restaurants and shops for example.

Staff plan young people's care very well. Placement plans are extremely detailed and provide a comprehensive picture of young people's personal needs, the individual support they require and the excellent progress they are making. Good systems are in place to ensure young people, their families and relevant professionals regularly contribute to the care planning process to ensure young people get the right support. One young person explained how she is supported to go into meetings and have her say. Care planning and day-to-day practice recognises young people as individuals with different backgrounds, interests, views and needs. Staff show an excellent knowledge of young people's needs which means they receive an individualised service that is tailored to meet their personal needs and identity.

Young people live in a healthy environment that actively promotes their physical and emotional well-being. They have good access to community health services and are registered with a local doctor, dentist, and opticians. Staff closely monitor young people's health to ensure they are aware of and able to respond to any issues or concerns. Consequently, staff have an excellent understanding of young people's specific health needs and ensure these are met on a daily basis. For example, they actively encourage young people to attend routine and specialist health appointments to ensure they remain healthy and their individual health needs are consistently met. Young people benefit from having access to the organisation's therapist. Staff work collaboratively with the therapist who provides them with guidance, support and training to enable them to understand young people's specific needs and promote positive outcomes.

Staff ensure the daily routine supports young people's participation in education. Young people talk confidently about the progress they have made and clearly take pride in what they have achieved. Staff take an active interest in young people's education. They provide them with a environment conducive to learning and completing their homework, and offer assistance where necessary. They work collaboratively with education staff to ensure young people have the opportunity achieve their academic potential.

Staff encourage young people to plan their recreation time positively. Young people are offered a wide-range of in-house activities as well as being encouraged to build confidence in their abilities and develop their talents by pursuing personal interests outside of the home.

Young people live in a suitably designed and comfortable house that blends well into the neighbourhood. The house is clean, well decorated and furnished and maintained to a high standard. Young people are encouraged to take ownership of the home and treat it with respect and care. They are encouraged to personalise their bedrooms and the home is made more homely by pictures of young people and staff displayed around the home.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people live in a safe environment where they are effectively protected from harm. They say they feel safe and are protected. Staff encourage young people to let them know if they have any worries or concerns. Young people say they are confident that if they felt unsafe or concerned they could talk to staff about things.

Staff give young people's safety the highest priority. They are trained to recognise symptoms of abuse and know exactly what they need to do to protect young people. Detailed risk assessments and risk management plans enable staff to effectively protect young people from harm. When staff are concerned about young people's safety they take decisive action to make sure young people are protected and receive the support they need. Staff have an excellent understanding of young people's vulnerability and the risks they may face in the community. They provide young people with good advice, guidance and support. As a result young people understand the consequences of risk taking behaviour and this is kept to a minimum.

There are very few incidents of young people going missing from home. Staff are aware of the reasons young people go missing and do their best to discourage them. On the rare occasions young people have gone missing, they return quickly. Staff always take the right action, including liaising with the police, to ensure young people's welfare is protected.

Staff take a non confrontational approach to supporting young people through troubled times, ensuring they are treated fairly and with respect. This approach

enables staff to identify the best ways to help young people manage and take responsibility for their behaviour. Staff are trained in behaviour management. They make good use of de-escalation techniques to deal with challenging behaviour constructively and always avoid the need for physical restraint. One young person said 'My behaviour has improved loads, I used to be really bad. I am a much calmer person now and I don't get restrained.'

The recruitment and selection of people working at the home is extremely thorough. Staff are carefully selected and vetted to ensure young people are protected from harm.

Young people live in a physically safe environment. They are protected by a comprehensive range of health and safety procedures, risk assessments and checks that are regularly reviewed and kept up-to-date. Young people and staff are regularly involved in fire drills to ensure they know how to safely evacuate the home in the event of a fire.

Leadership and management

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

Young people live in a home that is effectively and efficiently managed in their best interests. The manager and staff demonstrate a strong commitment to delivering an exceedingly high standard of childcare that places the needs of individual young people at the centre of their work. Staff have consistently high aspirations for young people and are proud of how well young people are doing. The effectiveness of this approach is evident in the positive progress young people are making in many aspects of their lives.

The home meets the aims and objectives of the statement of purpose. Young people and social workers are clear about the services and support the home provides. The manager has a realistic understanding of the home's strengths and takes positive action to address any identified shortfalls. They use detailed development plans; these are regularly reviewed, to ensure the home builds on its strengths and continues to improve based on its past performance. The provider and manager effectively monitor the operation of the home, the quality of care and outcomes for young people. The views and opinions of young people are integral to these processes to ensure they have the opportunity contribute to the day-to-day running of the home.

Young people are cared for by an adequate number of staff who are well trained and effectively supported. The home demonstrates a strong commitment towards staff training and development. All staff have undertaken mandatory training in key areas of practice and additional, more specific, training is provided to meet the emerging needs of young people. The manager provides good leadership, guidance and support for staff. As a result, staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and their duty to provide a high standard of care for young people. Staff confirm they receive good quality supervision from the manager and deputy

manager. This enables staff to develop their practice and reflect on young people's progress and how best to support them.

Young people's written records are securely stored. Staff ensure young people's records contain up-to-date information about them, including the relevant documents from the local authority, and remain relevant to young people's needs and development. As a result, the records provide a comprehensive picture of individual young people's experiences and inform plans for their future.

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.