

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Chris Scully
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This is a privately owned children's home registered for three young people with emotional or 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 **outstanding**.

The home is making a positive difference to young people's lives and provides them with the tools and opportunities to achieve positive outcomes. Young people are thriving as they live in an exceptionally supportive, caring and nurturing environment which enables them to make excellent progress. Young people enjoy extremely positive relationships with staff which are built upon honesty and trust. Young people say, 'we know they care about us and want the best for us.' Social workers comment upon the, 'extremely supportive, professional and stable staff team' and say how young people feel it is their home.

Staff are highly committed and have an innate understanding of each young person's specific and complex needs. Care planning is highly personalised and allows the uniqueness of each young person to shine. Staff have high, but realistic, aspirations for young people and work effectively to promote their growth and social and emotional development. Consequently, young people feel safe and are much more able to handle difficult and challenging situations. Young people's views are central to everything the home does. Young people know staff listen to them and take their views into consideration. Social workers report staff are, 'strong advocates', who effectively prioritise young people's safety and well-being. Staff work exceptionally well with schools, families, social workers and young people. This ensures young people continually receive the right help, support and guidance.

The home is well managed by an extremely committed Registered Manager and staff team. The Statement of Purpose and young people's guide provide clear insight into the type of care and support each young person can expect to receive. Records and documentation are generally well maintained, although there are some minor

shortfalls with regards to monitoring reports, missing from care risk assessments and key worker sessions. The impact on young people is minimised by staff's excellent understanding their needs. The Registered Manager provides strong leadership and works consistently to improve upon the quality of care and outcomes for young people.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- enhance effective and efficient monitoring of the home. For example, by recording consultation with family members and by recording points for further improvement. (NMS 21)
- enhance the systems for monitoring the quality and adequacy of record keeping. Particularly, the missing from care risk assessments and key worker sessions (NMS 22.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make exceptional progress in all areas of their lives. They are making continuous significant progress with regards to their emotional resilience, health, safety, personal relationships and education. Social workers say the outcomes for young people's education, contact and safety have, 'vastly improved'. Also that, 'excellent contact arrangements and support, mean young people feel happy and settled'. Young people are growing in confidence, self-esteem and self-respect. They are extremely keen to tell visitors that they now have unsupervised time with their friends away from the home. They say this means they are, 'like any other teenager'. Young people are more mature. They take more responsibility themselves and show empathy towards the needs and feelings of others. They make positive choices and choose not to engage in risk taking behaviours. Young people are aware of their background and, with exceptional support from staff, are able to make sense of this and how it has impacted upon them. They say, 'I can make more sense of things now.'

Young people are very aware of their own health care needs. They confidently take responsibility for the administration of some medication and ensure they have sufficient supplies when on contact visits. Young people are generally fit and well and enjoy a range of sporting activities, such as martial arts. They eat much more healthily and some relish the opportunities to cook for themselves and others. They are developing an excellent understanding of potential health risks and are mainly choosing not to take part in behaviour that affects their health. A young person said they know the dangers of smoking and did give up, but unfortunately started again.

They say they will try again, but now is not the right time; however they have reduced the amount that they smoke. Young people are very aware of the support systems available to them and that staff are trained in smoking cessation. Young people are able to access an extensive range of health support agencies; as a result they receive excellent support on a wide range of health care issues.

Young people's attendance at school is very good. All young people have significantly improved their attendance in the last year and are much more motivated to do well. Social workers say young people are much happier in school. This is because staff effectively challenge barriers to learning and work effectively with schools to support young people. Young people have high aspirations for themselves and some have clear career paths in mind, for example, the armed forces and catering. Young people are working hard to secure the qualifications they need to achieve their chosen career paths. They say their experience on work placement has significantly enhanced their desire to work in catering. This has helped develop their confidence in their own ability and skills in order to pursue this further. School reports clearly demonstrate the progress young people have made over the past year, such as the ability to remain in school for the whole day.

Young people benefit from regular and appropriate contact with their families and friends. This enables them to develop and sustain positive relationships with those people who are important to them. They look forward to spending time with them and happily regale staff with tales of what they have done. Young people are pleased they had the opportunities to celebrate their birthday with family members. Staff work exceptionally hard to ensure young people enjoy their time with their family. They are acutely aware of young people's vulnerabilities and make sure they are effectively and sensitively supported. Young people say, 'staff make sure we get to see our family, because they know it's important to me.' Young people enjoy the same social experiences of other young people of a similar age and ability, for example, spending time with their friends and eating out at restaurants.

Young people are effectively prepared to become more independent and make a successful transition into adult life, appropriate to their abilities, age and level of understanding. They establish positive and appropriate social relationships and are able to succeed in education and develop a range of practical skills. This includes menu planning, shopping and managing their finances. Young people are becoming adept at finding the best deal for items they wish to purchase, such as amplifiers and effectively negotiate with staff as to how to safely purchase these. Young people's views are integral to the running of the home. Young people say, 'it's our home and we have a big say in what happens.' This includes where to go on holiday and what music is played in the car. Young people are pleased with how they have rearranged their bedrooms. They acknowledge the support from staff in completing this and feel it now better reflects who they are, as some of the posters were too young for them.

Quality of care

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

Young people thrive because they live in a stable, nurturing and supportive environment. They have a strong sense of belonging. They say, 'this is our home' and, 'we are family'. Staff are excellent at building positive relationships with them. Consequently, young people are able to resolve any problems in a constructive manner. This is echoed by social workers who say they are, 'extremely impressed' by the, 'excellent' care and support provided to young people'. Young people feel valued because staff listen to them, value their opinions and respect them as individuals. They say, 'the staff are great, they are always there for us' and explain how they enjoy living here because of them. Young people are very keen to let visitors know that, staff 'do not put an act on for visitors, they don't need to and any way you would know if it was false.' Ultimately, young people enjoy extremely positive relationships with staff which enable them to make excellent progress in all aspects of their lives.

Young people are very aware that staff may not always be able to act upon their requests. They are aware of the complaints system should they have any concerns. They say, 'we don't need to complain as they (staff) are always there to talk to and help us sort things out.' Young people's views, wishes and feelings are of paramount importance to staff. Young people receive exceptional individualised support, which stems from staff's intuitive understanding of each young person's needs. This means they are able to provide effective guidance and reassurance to young people to help reduce any anxieties or worries they may have. Social workers say staff are very good advocates for young people and are positive parental role models.

Young people's care is exceptionally well planned. Placement plans provide a comprehensive picture of their personal needs and support young people's needs. Staff work exceedingly well with social workers to ensure placement plans remain up to date, thus consistently meeting young people's needs. Social workers say communication between them and the home is 'excellent'. Care planning clearly identifies the uniqueness of young people and effectively takes into consideration their needs, background, interests and views. The home works extremely well in partnerships with families, placing authorities, schools and health care professionals to promote young people's welfare. Young people live in a healthy environment that actively promotes their physical health and emotional well-being. Young people's health care needs are identified and are extremely well supported. Staff closely monitor them to ensure they remain fit and well and take effective action to ensure they receive the right help at the right time. Social workers say young people are much more able to talk about any issues that are concerning them. Consequently, they are able to seek the help and support they need to move on in their lives.

Young people's educational needs are extremely well supported. Staff have consistently high aspirations for young people. They often bring in additional reading material aimed at specific young people, such as biographies of footballers, questions and answer books and recipe books. This effectively engages and encourages young people's interests and enables them to improve upon their reading skills. Young people talk enthusiastically about the support they receive from staff with regards to their education. Schools reports say young people's increased attendance is a, 'fantastic achievement.' They too recognise the support provided, which means

young people arrive on time and are ready to learn. Consequently, young people are engaging with their learning. Staff are extremely proactive at resolving issues which may be a barrier to young people's learning, such as their behaviour. Young people acknowledge this and the action they have taken to reduce any reoccurrence. They say, 'I know I let them and me down, but I am not going there again, it's too important to mess up.'

Staff encourage young people to take part in a wide range of activities and follow their individual interests and talents. Young people enjoy going fishing, martial art classes, football and talking about the favourite films. Young people have the same opportunities as any other young person of a similar age. This includes eating out at various restaurants, going to concerts, on holiday and days out. Young people say they enjoy learning to play the guitar. They confidently regale visitors with their increasing knowledge of music and how they need to be respectful of the neighbours when using the amplifier. Young people live in a very comfortable and homely family house in a residential neighbourhood. It is close to shops, public transport, schools and community amenities. The house is decorated and furnished to a good standard. Young people are keen to point out how they chose various items for the lounge and feel that the colour is much more homely. Young people's bedrooms are personalised and clearly reflect their individual tastes and interests.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Staff consistently ensure the welfare of young people is paramount. They effectively enable them to overcome any difficulties they may face so they have an opportunity to lead happy and fulfilling lives. They live in a safe environment where they are effectively protected from harm and have a strong sense of safety and well-being. Young people say they feel safe living here. They say this is because staff talk to them about potential issues and how they can keep themselves safe, for example, when using their laptops.

Young people are safeguarded because of staff's secure understanding of the home's safeguarding and child protection procedures. This means they are clear on the action to take should they have any concerns. Staff are highly committed to preserving the confidentiality, dignity and privacy of young people. Extremely positive relationships with social workers mean staff are fully aware of any issues which may impact upon young people's safety or well-being. Therefore they are able to take appropriate action to support each young person, such as reporting concerns regarding social networking sites. Social workers are very complimentary about the home's commitment to keeping young people safe, while enabling them to have the same opportunities as any other teenager.

Young people do not go missing. They say, 'staff keep us safe, we don't go missing, we don't want to and there is no need for us to do it.' Young people are extremely aware of what would happen if they are late home. They say, 'they (staff) will ring

me if I'm late, because they worry about me. But that's what you do with family.' Clear procedures are in place should a young person be missing. Staff are very aware of these, however, the risk assessments do not show when a young person should be reported missing. This is a recording issue, as staff are very clear on the specific action to take for each young person.

Young people have clear, consistent boundaries. They know what is expected of them and what is unacceptable. They understand the home's rules and possible consequences, and say, 'the rules are fair.' Incentive schemes work extremely well as they are meaningful to young people. Staff are skilled at asking open-ended questions. This enables young people to consider their actions, reflect upon them and consider different ways of handling difficult situations. Staff are extremely positive role models and provide high levels of appropriate praise and encouragement. As a result incidents of inappropriate behaviour have significantly reduced and sanctions are rare.

Young people are safe because staff carry out regular health and safety checks of the premises and obtain certifications for gas, electrical and fire safety checks. They ensure all visitors to the home are fully aware of the fire evacuation procedure and how to evacuate in an emergency. Young people are protected by a comprehensive range of health and safety procedures and risk assessments that are consistently implemented in practice. The recruitment and selection of people working at the home is thorough and protects young people from having contact with unsuitable people. Young people are also protected by the effective arrangements for vetting and supervising visitors.

Leadership and management

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

The home is led by a committed, enthusiastic and competent Registered Manager. Staff are extremely well supported and have an excellent understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They demonstrate a strong commitment to delivering exceptional childcare practice, tailored to the specific and diverse needs of the young people. This is evident through the excellent progress young people are making. Staff are held accountable for their performance and their individual development needs are identified through regular professional supervisions. This means they are able to reflect upon their performance and consider ways of further enhancing this.

Staff work extremely well as a team. They say, 'we all want the best for the young people, it is a pleasure to come to work.' Regular opportunities to meet as a team mean they are able to consider young people's progress and modify any plans to ensure they remain current. The skills within the staff team effectively match the needs of the young people. The numbers of staff on duty are sufficient to meet the needs of the young people. Staff receive good quality training to help them develop their individual skills and knowledge relevant to the young people they care for.

The Statement of Purpose and young person's guide are shared with young people,

their families and placing authorities. These are well written and provide a clear picture of the home's aims and objectives. This means placing authorities, young people and their families are well aware of the care and support young people can expect to receive. Social worker's and independent reviewing officers are knowledgeable about the care and support provided. They are extremely complimentary about the home and the excellent progress young people are making.

The home demonstrates a strong capacity for continued improvement based upon its performance and development of positive outcomes for young people. The Registered Manager has a realistic understanding of the strengths of the service and the areas for further development. Monitoring of the home is sound. However, areas for further improvement are not always clear in documentation. Young people, their families and staff are regularly consulted about the care provided, but the extent of discussion with family members is not recorded.

Effective action has been taken to address the recommendations from the last inspection. The home has a clear development plan in place which outlines its objectives for the forthcoming year. Copies of the manager's monitoring are sent to Ofsted twice a year. This has improved upon the monitoring and organisation of the home. Young people's records are securely stored and provide a clear and detailed picture of their lives, progress and experiences. However, on a small number of occasions records of key worker sessions have not reflected changes to young people's risk assessments. However it is clear from young people, staff and social workers that these discussions are taking place and changes are implemented in practice. Consequently, young people demonstrate a greater awareness of their emotional well-being and safety.

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.