

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Mark Kersh
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is run by a privately owned company and is registered for a maximum of four young people who have emotional or behavioural difficulties. There is a facility to educate young people on site if they are unable to maintain their current school placement.

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**.

Staff have extremely high aspirations for all young people in their care and outcomes for young people in the home are exceptional. Staff have highly effective relationships with parents, carers, education and social care professionals. These ensure a comprehensive approach is maintained in relation to placement planning, behaviour and life skills training. Young people are safe and feel safe in this home.

Young people have opportunities to influence their care and the routines in the home. Staff consult them over the care provided and support them to prepare for reviews and contact. Practice is focused and meets the needs of individual young people. The relationships between the staff, who provide continuity of care to young people, is excellent.

The management team provides strong leadership, sets high standards and know and understand the strengths and weaknesses of the home. Effective systems ensure action is taken to secure improvement. As a consequence young people's needs remain central to practice and they experience improved outcomes across all aspects of their development. Their needs and achievements are closely scrutinised and effective monitoring processes ensure that any weaknesses or patterns of concern are promptly identified and addressed.

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people benefit from well-established and very effective care which helps them to make sense of past adverse experiences, develop coping strategies for the future and sustain their emotional and psychological health. Additional professional help is available to those young people who struggle to understand their reasons for being in care. This helps them to build resilience and self-esteem and promotes their ability to enjoy positive attachments.

Comprehensive health care plans ensure that the specific health care needs of young people are known and supported. Staff work closely with parents and health care agencies in the community. Young people are educated and supported by staff to manage effectively their own particular health care needs. This ensures that young people maintain good health in the short and longer term.

Young people progress in education and achieve in line with their peers. They have made excellent progress in respect of their individual starting points. Young people have individualised plans and attend various types of schooling to help them achieve this. For example, some young people are tutored at the home's registered on-site school and others attend mainstream school. There have been significant improvements in their educational outcomes; for example, in academic progress and a great improvement in their attendance at school. This enables them to engage effectively with learning and with their peers and prepares them well for future examination tests.

Staff enable and support young people to participate in the day-to-day running of the home. Strategies for consultation are dynamic and effective, ensuring young people feel listened to; as a group and thorough individual consultations with the manager, young people's opinions are strongly valued. Young people participate well within the community and this ensures they maintain positive links with people of a similar background and heritage.

Young people confirm that they understand the contact plans and arrangements that are in place. These are made at the time of accommodation and are reviewed regularly. Staff work closely with families in line with placement plans, likewise, any restrictions are clearly noted. This practice encourages and supports positive relationships for young people with the significant people in their lives.

Young people receive outstanding support to develop their independence living skills. When risk assessed as being safe to do so, they can do their own washing, ironing, domestic chores, budgeting, shopping and cooking for themselves. Highly individualised care is in place which is influenced by the views of young people. Two young people spoke positively of how their independence skills training is going at a pace they felt they could manage and are comfortable with. Young people have enjoyed and been educated in learning what employers want, through a training course. They experienced completing application forms and taking part in mock interviews. This will benefit them greatly in preparation for adulthood.

Quality of care

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

The excellent relationships between staff and young people have created a warm and relaxing atmosphere where young people succeed and feel at home. Young people thrive in this nurturing and supportive environment which clearly identifies their individual needs. This includes their cultural, religious and dietary needs. Young people are very positive about their time at the home. One young person says, 'staff do their best for you and are great.' Parents are also very pleased with the quality of care provided and feel that the young people are happy. Completed questionnaires reflect this and one parent says, 'I could not ask for a better service', and described the care provided as 'brilliant.'

There is a strong ethos of listening to young people and letting them express themselves through key-worker sessions, young people's meetings and individual time with the manager. This enables young people to make choices in all aspects of their daily living. The home also consults with other professionals to see if they have any issues they want to raise on behalf of young people. Their feedback informs the process of improvement and contributes to any action taken. A social worker said the 'home is very child centred, always put young people first and respond to all individual needs.' Staff support young people to understand when their wishes cannot be met through group and individual work.

Young people know how to make a complaint and who to complain to. Details of how they may contact advocacy advice are readily available to them at their time of admission. And also clearly displayed so that they know who to contact if they feel their views have not been sufficiently taken into account or considered by external agencies.

Staff are extremely knowledgeable about the needs of each individual and ensure the focus of work undertaken is in line with review decisions. Young people's individual placement care plans consistently reflect and make reference to the full range of work undertaken. Evidence is available in the home showing highly individualised independence work and leisure activities young people take part in, all of which is consistently detailed in the home's internal care plans. Young people understand their plans and it is evident that they contribute to them and sign their name for agreement.

Young people's good health is promoted. All have individual health care plans in place which enable their health needs to be met. All necessary services are in place to respond to their needs, including their registration with primary health care services, such as General Practitioners, opticians and dentists within the locality. Young people are protected by the safe administration of medication. Appropriate action is taken to ensure that they cannot have unauthorised access to medication and that it is administered only as prescribed. There are no issues with alcohol or substance misuse and staff work tirelessly with young people who smoke to encourage them to decrease or quit the habit. Staff make sure young people are aware of how this could impact negatively on their health over time.

Young people talk with enthusiasm and fun about the activities which they participate in. Photographs are displayed around the home of day trips, holidays and in-house activities. Staff are creative and address issues, such as cultural awareness and anti-bullying through art work and activities. There are regular themed nights and trips out to carnivals within the community and restaurants are sourced to meet the cultural needs of young people.

This home is extremely well-maintained and has a warm and homeliness presence. Young people's bedrooms are customised with photographs and posters and décor is to individual tastes. The home is decorated well with many seating areas for privacy or group interaction. As a result of the efforts made, young people are respectful of the homely environment and damage very rarely occurs.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say they feel safe and that staff keep them safe. They confirm that there is no bullying and if any incidents occur, such as name calling, it is tackled immediately. Staff are confident in the processes to follow should they be concerned for a young person's safety or welfare and are aware of both the homes and the local child protection procedures. Close co-ordination with the local authority designated officer (LADO) also enables open dialogue and consultation to improve practice. A manager of the safeguarding service commented 'I'm happy the home knows where we are in the event of a disclosure or to seek advice.'

Young people are protected by procedures should they go missing. Robust risk assessments are in place, which identify the risks of young people while they are in and out of the home. These systems are effective because no young people have recently gone missing from care. There is a high level of staffing, which ensures that young people are consistently supervised.

Staff work well as a team and form positive relationships with the young people. The atmosphere at the home is relaxed and the emphasis amongst the staff team is to defuse any potentially difficult and challenging situations. Staff receive the appropriate training and have a good understanding of individual crisis management plans and strategies in place for managing difficult behaviours. This enables them to manage situations with skill and confidence. There has not been any need for restraint for some considerable time. Staff are consistent and clear in their expectations and young people have a good understanding of the rules, consequences and reward systems.

The recruitment and selection of people working at the home is very thorough to make sure young people are protected. The manager carefully ensures that staff have the skills and competencies to meet the needs of individual young people. A recently recruited member of staff confirmed this to be the case. Also there are

suitable systems in place to ensure that visitors to the home are suitably checked and supervised to protect young people.

The home provides a physically safe environment for the young people. There is a comprehensive range of risk assessments in place. These include building, fire safety and general activities as well as individual risk assessments. Regular maintenance of the building along with maintenance and testing of equipment further promotes the safety and well being of the young people.

Leadership and management

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

The Registered Manager is experienced and exercises effective leadership of the home. This ensures that the home is organised, managed and staffed to a high level and provides excellent quality of care that meets the needs of young people. Two deputies support the Registered Manager who equally are experienced and support the continuing improvements within the home's management systems. Social workers have commended the management team and staff on their exceptional oversight, and their ability to quickly seek advice and by regularly informing them of young people's progress.

There were no requirements or recommendations made at the previous inspection. No complaints have been made by young people or the local community about the home.

The provider meets and exceeds the aims and objectives that are set out in the Statement of Purpose. Staff fully understand the functions and ethos of the home and provide an exceptional service. The young people's guide provides clear and friendly information which is available prior to or on admission to the home.

The management team have an excellent understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home and there is a very detailed and realistic development/progress plan in place. Regular various methods of effective and evaluative monthly monitoring is taking place by the management team and by an external manager within this organisation. This monitoring includes evaluative studies of all records and the impact this has for the young people in their care. The views of young people, their families and other stakeholders via questionnaires and during visits are regularly sought to consider new ways of improving the provision.

The staff team provides one-to-one support for young people and has a good balance in terms of age, gender and ethnicity. Staff are passionate and enthusiastic about the service they provide to young people. In addition to the mandatory training, they are keen to continue to develop their knowledge and skills through the range of training that is available to them. Newly appointed staff move on to complete the Children and Young People's Workforce diploma at level 3 once they have completed their induction training. This ensures that young people are cared for by staff that have the knowledge and skills to meet their individual needs.

The home evidences an excellent capacity for continued improvement. Frequent discussions take place during supervision and team meetings with regards to young people's progress and practice issues. Supervision is held regularly and enables staff to respond well to the needs of young people as well as highlighting any developmental needs that they may have. Young people meet regularly with the manager, are involved in training and have their own personal development plans in a working document entitled 'this is my time'. This enables them to regularly reflect back on targets set and consider any progress made.

Young people's records are clear and comprehensive. They contribute to an understanding of the lives of young people, their on-going development and provide a clear overview of the skills and experiences that they have achieved. These records are stored securely for confidentiality reasons. Robust systems are in place to ensure that significant events are notified to the relevant authorities. This ensures that appropriate action is taken regarding incidents.

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.