

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Jo Stephenson
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home provides short-term care and accommodation for up to three young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. It is operated and managed by a private organisation, in partnership with a local authority.

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 exceptionally quality and personalised care for young people. The environment is nurturing and takes account of the individual needs of each young person, and therefore they thrive in all aspects of their development. The staff team is committed and has high aspirations for the young people. Promoting positive outcomes is central to the work of the home. Young people are encouraged and supported to articulate their views on the running of the home and all areas of their welfare and care.

Young people enjoy excellent relationships with staff and benefit from the family atmosphere at the home. Young people are encouraged to identify their ambitions and are stimulated to achieve these. As a result, they experience improved self-confidence and self-esteem. Young people are supported to pursue personal interests and these are integrated into individualised assessment records and placement plans.

Staff are well trained and supported in their role and their enthusiasm is clear. The management team ensures that robust monitoring systems are in place to continually review outcomes for young people and the quality of care. Managers use feedback from placing authorities, young people and their families to shape the development of the home and identify strengths and areas for improvement.

Young people say that they are safe and feel safe at the home. They recognise that house rules are in place to protect them and understand the reasons for these.

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people make substantial progress in all aspects of their lives. Staff actively promote and celebrate the achievements of young people and as a result, they develop a positive self-view and emotional resilience. Staff have high ambitions for young people and provide consistent incentives, motivation and encouragement. This means that young people respond well and form appropriate relationships with staff. Young people are helped to understand their cultural and family background through personalised assessment documents and detailed internal placement plans. This is further supported by effective partnership working between the home and other professionals. Therefore, young people are able to make sense of their past and identify their future plans.

Young people enjoy a healthy diet that takes account of their personal preferences and cultural backgrounds. Meals are sociable occasions and staff encourage young people to discuss a variety of topics and reflect on their achievements during the day. This means that young people learn valuable social skills. Young people are looked after in a warm and caring environment with firm and consistent boundaries. There is a positive approach to promoting the emotional, physical and psychological health of young people. Staff are able to identify the specific health needs of young people and access specialist services to address these. Subsequently, young people are supported to make positive choices regarding their health and lifestyle. Staff encourage young people to take responsibility for their own healthy lifestyle decisions and choices and support this through engaging sessions relating to key health risks.

Staff actively encourage young people to attend their education placements and provide practical assistance to support this. Young people take pride when talking about their educational achievements and are making good progress; working toward gaining academic qualifications relevant to their age and abilities. One young person said, 'I'm going to get my GCSE's now, I didn't think that was going to happen.' Progress in education is detailed in assessment reports completed on behalf of the placing authority and discussed with young people during one-to-one sessions. This means that the headway young people are making in education is clearly recorded or celebrated.

Staff work closely with families in line with statutory care plans, likewise, any restrictions are clearly recorded. Young people speak positively of the support they are given by staff to ensure that contact goes ahead. For example, staff welcome family and friends into the home and make arrangement for other young people to participate in off-site activities to allow young people private time with their families. This means that young people are supported to re-establish and sustain positive relationships with their families and friends, and ensures they are not isolated from their peer group.

The home encourages young people to participate in social activities in the local

community. Young people engage in activities that promote welfare, physical health and emotional development. They are given opportunities to socialise with friends in the community, outside of the residential group. As a result, young people are able to expand their social circle. Staff enable young people to express their views on the running of the home through interesting and interactive group meetings and this means that young people are listened to and are involved in the running of the home.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy exceptionally strong and positive relationships with staff and this improves their self-confidence because they are well supported and looked after. The atmosphere in the home is calm, relaxed and structured; and young people thrive in this nurturing environment. Staff demonstrate an excellent understanding of the individual needs of young people and are able to identify antecedents to changes in mood. Staff are skilled at adapting their care practices to meet individual needs and therefore, young people are at the centre of the ethos of the home. Young people speak positively of the staff team saying, 'The staff make us feel special, they don't just say they care they really really do.'

Staff actively consult with young people on all aspects of their care and this is a considerable strength of the home. One-to-one sessions that underpin the assessment reports completed for the placing authority, are detailed and address a range of topics relevant to individual young people. Young people benefit from detailed internal plans and risk assessments that clearly identify their individual needs and denote comprehensive strategies for meeting these. Plans include work undertaken with other agencies when necessary, such as community police, youth offending services and mental health professionals. As a result, young people are provided with a holistic approach to their care. Young people are encouraged to review the progress of their plans with allocated keyworkers and this means that young people have a good understanding of the aims and objectives of the placement. Progress made by young people is well documented and recorded and because of this young people are provided with a clear and helpful synopsis of their placement. Placing authorities consider the home's written and verbal contribution to assessments and reviews to be excellent. One social worker commented, 'the professionalism and quality of the reports we receive helps us to effectively plan for a child future.'

Young people say they feel listened to and that they are able to influence the running of the home and understand why it is not always possible to act on their wishes. Managers welcome the constructive suggestions of young people, who demonstrate confidence and assertion in expressing their views. Young people are very aware of how to make a complaint, and can directly access complaints forms. Complaints from young people are rare, but taken seriously and investigated fully in appropriate time scales. Young people receive written and verbal feedback on any concerns they raise and are able to comment on the outcome of these.

Staff work in partnership with the placing authority to ensure that young people have suitable school placements that take account of any special educational needs they have. Barriers to education are challenged and the home actively seeks to resolve these issues by engaging with education providers and identifying practical solutions. For example, young people who experience exclusions from school, continue their learning by following robust timetables that are supported by their educational provisions and mirror key-stage learning objectives. The manager ensures that staff have access to suitable educational resources to support young people within the home to re-engage in education. As a result, education for young people is continually promoted.

Young people's general health needs are met and they access all primary healthcare services, such as regular doctors, dentist and optician appointments. Staff source voluntary and statutory specialist health services if young people require additional support. As a result, young people benefit from a holistic approach to maintaining their physical, psychological and emotional health and receive the bespoke health care they require to develop.

The home is comfortable and well maintained and has pictures, photographs and soft furnishings that create a homely atmosphere. Young people take responsibility for their bedrooms and are encouraged to take pride in their surroundings. The home is appropriately located and in easy reach of local facilities.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are comfortable and relaxed in the home and say they feel safe. Some young people are not used to feeling secure and staff have worked hard to achieve an atmosphere of safety and sanctuary. Staff ensure that detailed risk assessments are in place to protect young people from harm and promote their well-being and safety. Staff are able to identify vulnerabilities and put measures in place to reduce known risks. Young people are encouraged to comment on these plans and take responsibility for adhering to their contents. This allows young people to take appropriate risks to assist their development toward independence. As a result, young people understand why restrictions may be imposed on them and the reason for these.

Staff receive regular training in safeguarding and child protection. The home has positive relationships with local police and community support officers, who visit the home socially. This means young people are able to gain a better understanding of the role of the police and the potential legal implications of some behaviour. Protocols are in place regarding young people who go missing from the home. Staff work creatively and with other agencies, to educate young people around the impact going missing has on their safety. Staff are able to identify behaviours and circumstances that cause incidents of missing from home and address these issues with young people in one-to-one sessions. Subsequently, young people are

supported to make decisions that keep them safe.

Behaviour management in the home is proactive, with an emphasis on identifying and understanding triggers and pre-empting these. Incidents of bullying are rare. Young people participate in regular group sessions and openly discuss their thoughts and feeling and the effect bullying has on others and the safety of the home. Detailed and personalised behaviours plans for young people provide staff with guidance on interventions and de-escalation techniques to reduce unacceptable behaviours. Reward systems are in place and minimal sanctions are used. Physical restraint is rare and only ever used as a last resort and associated records are appropriately completed. This means that young people engage with staff to recognise alternative approaches to managing their behaviour. Young people are encouraged to discuss incidents of poor behaviour and consider the impact this has on others.

The home is secure and physically safe. Young people have a good understanding of fire procedures and regularly participate in fire tests and drills. Staff maintain health and safety records to a high standard and all environmental checks have been completed. The home adheres to organisational recruitment procedures and robust checks are completed on all new starters. This means that young people work with a suitable vetted staff team.

Leadership and management

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

Young people live in a home that is effectively and efficiently run by a permanent manager, who is registered with Ofsted. The home meets the aims and objectives of its Statement of Purpose and young people, staff and the placing authority are clear about the support the home provides. The manager and staff have a strong commitment to improving outcomes for young people and delivering an excellent service tailored to the needs of individual young people. This is demonstrated by the significant progress young people make.

The manager is at the centre of the home and has a clear oversight of young people's progress, staff development and areas for improvement. Staff and young people benefit from vibrant and enthusiastic leadership that emphasises high expectations and sustainable progress. Social workers refer to the Registered Manager as 'inspirational' and praise the commitment shown to working in partnership with the placing authority.

Staff say they feel supported in their role and receive regular and effective supervision. Staff meetings are held monthly and cover a range of topic including the progress the home is making in supporting young people to achieve their individual targets. Complaints recorded since the last inspection have been effectively addressed and resolved. All staff complete mandatory training that is frequently updated. Staff say they are empowered and directly involved in the development of the home and praise the commitment of the manager.

The home has established excellent partnership working with other professionals and placing authorities. The manager promotes effective consultation with young people prior to their reviews and supports young people to attend and express their wishes. As a result, young people say they feel involved in decisions about their future. Feedback received during the inspection from professionals involved with the service was positive. One social worker stated, 'this placement really works for young people and communication with the home is excellent.'

The Registered Manager's review of the quality of care provided by the service and outcomes for young people is robust, and any shortfalls detected are immediately addressed. Managers ensure that significant events are recorded and the appropriate authorities notified. The home operates central systems to record incidents and monitor actions taken. Records are cross referenced to case files and detailed accounts of incidents are completed. Therefore, records contribute to the understanding of a young person's life and the value and impact of the service on young people is clearly apparent. Managers ensure that the physical environment of the home is maintained to a high standard and that financial resources are available for this purpose.

Young people develop in an environment where boundaries and expectations are clear and staff practice is consistent. As a result, the home has a positive impact on young people and improves their life chances through commitment and support.

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.