

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Sonya Robinson
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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* (March 2011) and the evaluation schedule for children's homes.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service that exceeds minimum requirements

Satisfactory: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for two young people between the ages of 11 to 17 years. They can also provide transitional care for young people entering into adulthood for a specified period of time.

The home is owned by a private organisation.

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **outstanding**.

The strength of this setting is the home's commitment to providing exceptional care and support to young people. The staff and Registered Manager are enthusiastic and competent, and have an innate understanding of the complex and diverse needs of the young people. Highly personalised care and support means young people's needs are met exceptionally well in practice and result in outstanding outcomes. Staff have an excellent understanding that young people need a stable, secure and caring environment in which to thrive and develop to their full potential. The home takes positive steps to meet the diverse and complex needs of the young people placed.

Young people are consulted on all aspects of the home and are very pleased with the their bedrooms, which are highly personalised. Young people have very positive relationships with staff and say they are 'the best'. They are confident to approach staff with any concerns and know that they will be listened to and supported. Social workers and other professionals are complimentary about the staff and the support provided to young people. Young people say very clearly that they feel safe living at this home and that they are happy here. The home values the rights of the young people and treats them all with respect and dignity.

The home's owners and management team routinely make good use of robust monitoring to continually improve the outcomes for young people. They have embraced the new regulations and guidance in children's services. As a result only one recommendation is made from this inspection, which relates to the continual progress of staff undertaking childcare training.

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 existing care staff have attained a minimum level 3 qualification. This was previously National Vocational Qualification in Caring for Children and Young People and from September 2010 is the Children and Young People's Workforce Diploma. (NMS 18.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are making excellent progress in their education, emotional resilience and their trust in the staff who work at the home. They receive excellent support through external services such as psychologists and counsellors. This enables them to make sense of their lives and begin to understand their individual circumstances. Weekly individual key worker sessions enable young people and their key worker to come together and review their care needs. In addition staff have monthly meetings in order to effectively support the work undertaken with the young people.

Young people are supported to develop skills in areas of personal hygiene, budgeting, emotional health and personal requisites. Young people enjoy planning the menu and are skilled in their understanding of healthy food and lifestyle. The staff ensure that each young person is encouraged to undertake appropriate leisure activities including going to the gym, running, swimming, and they enjoy long country walks promoting healthy and active lifestyles. Young people benefit from effective and consistent health care. The health care plan provides detailed information and includes a summary of doctors, dentists and other appointments attended by the young people. Young people have access to good health information including a smoking cessation, drug awareness and puberty-related issues. This supports young people's day-to-day learning within the home and addresses age-appropriate development in a positive way.

Young people are making very good progress with their education. The support to young people within the home is outstanding, for example, such as access to the internet on their laptop and individual work from tutors when needed. This provides young people with further opportunities to engage, which they do enthusiastically, producing portfolios containing excellent work which they take pride in. They comment very positively about education and their achievements.

Young people are making excellent progress with regard to their starting points in developing a positive and realistic view of themselves and in working to address their specific needs. Social workers commented that young people say how happy they are within this home and young people have stated 'they are amazing, the staff never give up on you, always there when you need them', the management, 'look after you dead well, best carers in the world.'

Young people are in regular contact with family members and significant others which enables them to retain positive relationships with them. Young people say that this is very important to them and as a consequence helps their self-esteem.

Young people are exceptionally well supported to become more independent and to learn new skills. Young people routinely carry out tasks such as laundry, assisting with cooking, preparing and clearing away meals appropriate to their age and level of understanding. The continued strong emphasis on community participation and presence helps young people develop skills that will help them in the future to keep themselves and others safe. Young people who have moved onto adult life have sustained engagement in education and have recently begun university.

Quality of care

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

Equality and diversity are well established within the culture and ethos of the home and practice is clearly underpinned by fairness. A high quality of care is being provided and this enables young people to have opportunities to develop self-knowledge, self-help skills and build self-esteem. Communication between staff, young people and their parents, social workers and other professionals is coordinated extremely well. Social workers confirm that clear lines of communication have been established and there are highly effective partnership arrangements, meaning each young person makes excellent progress.

Young people are thriving in a stable, nurturing and supportive environment. Feedback from mental health professionals has included 'in my work I visit many organisations and I hold the views that the standards of care in this service is the best I have ever encountered.' Young people say 'I love my home and the staff as they always look after me and I feel safe with them around, the staff are kind, thoughtful and the best people in the whole wide world.. Staff display clear warmth for the young people and this is evident when young people return from school greeting the staff and talking enthusiastically about their day. Young people are genuinely happy in the company of staff.

Staff promote consistent aspirations for the young people. They are fully committed to ensuring that each young person has the best opportunities and can achieve their full potential. This results in young people wanting to achieve and consequently they make exceptional progress within education.

The care planning for young people is exceptional. Plans detail a clear picture of young people's needs and what steps are being taken to address their needs consistently and appropriately. Access to external support agencies ensure that young people are receiving the right level of individual care in a supportive and nurturing environment.

Young people's care plans are regularly reviewed to ensure the care offered is consistently meeting their individual needs. Any changes are discussed with the young people, inviting honest feedback about the care they receive. A staff member said 'it is great here, we all want what is best for the young people.'

Young people feel their wishes and feelings are actively sought and that they

influence the running of the home. Young people confirm they know how to complain and how to access information to assist them to do this. Information is available in the young people's guide and notice board within the home and includes contact numbers for external agencies. The positive relationship between staff and young people ensures that the young people's views are valued and that they feel confident to raise matters.

Staff have an excellent knowledge of the young people living in the home and recognise individual triggers for each young person. Staff have developed strategies in order to recognise and manage specific triggers effectively and this includes the management of unacceptable behaviour. Each young person has an individual behaviour management plan that details specific targets coupled with strategies for managing behaviour. In addition clear evidence of key worker sessions addressing specific behaviours complements the team work involved in their care.

The houses provide pleasant, warm and homely accommodation. Furnishings and décor are of a high standard. Young people say that they have everything that they need and enjoy the opportunities to personalise their bedrooms. Young people's personal achievements and photographs of outings and activities can also be found around the houses. Young people enjoy a variety of activities, including going to the gym, walking, days out to the countryside, funfair, swimming, zoo, meals out and the cinema. The rear gardens are well maintained and are used by young people for fun and relaxation.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people very clearly state that they are safe and happy living at the home. They learn to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative and understand how they contribute to the home's operation. They develop skills that enable them to be actively involved in the local community so they learn about how to adapt their behaviour in different settings. Consequently young people's personalities develop, resulting in excellent progress. They develop an increasing understanding and awareness of how to keep themselves safe and to lead safe lives.

Young people say that bullying is not an issue of concern to them and confirm that staff do not tolerate any form of bullying. The young people are confident that inappropriate views would be challenged. A range of anti-bullying information is available including board games, and a clear anti-bullying message is delivered by staff.

Suitable safeguarding and complaints information is provided for young people. They are aware of the content of this information and acknowledge that they will not suffer any recrimination if complaints and grumbles are made. No complaints had been made. Staff receive regular training to update their knowledge and have a good understanding of safeguarding policies, procedures and actions they should take, if

an incident arises. There are systems in place for dealing with young people who go missing from home. Risk assessments take account of a young person's potential to go missing; however incidents of young people going missing overnight are not common place.

There are boundaries that are put in place to ensure that behaviours can be managed successfully. Young people spoke clearly about house rules and expectations in behaviour. There have been no restraints or sanctions used within this home for some years. This clearly demonstrates the positive relationships built up with young people and staff, and shows that staff can intervene when necessary to diffuse difficult situations. All staff receive regular and refresher training in positive handling techniques.

Young people benefit from an experienced and stable staff team. Appropriate recruitment policies and procedures are in place and personnel files are well organised. Information held in-house confirmed that no staff start work prior to being in receipt of an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check. A suitable checking system is evident throughout the recruitment process. Vetting of visitors to the home is undertaken with identity checks being carried out before access is permitted.

Health and safety at the home is particularly well managed, ensuring staff and young people remain safe. This includes regular certification of gas and electrical installations. A fire risk assessment of the premises is available with regular practice of evacuation so young people know what to do in the case of an emergency. There are also risk assessments in place to support practice and help minimise hazards.

Leadership and management

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

The owners of the home and senior management team work proactively to continually improve the standards of care and support in this service. The home is run by a competent and experienced manager, who is supported by a staff team who show immense care and respect towards the young people. Staff are provided with good quality training, support and resources to enable them to understand the needs of young people. Effective working relationships are forged with mental health services, placing authorities and schools. All records made by staff are detailed, appropriately compiled, kept up to date and stored securely. This ensures young people are getting the required resources to enhance their education, health and welfare.

Young people are supported by sufficient numbers of staff to meet their needs. Regular comprehensive handovers are well established to ensure key information about the care and support of young people is known by all staff. The home has forged good relationships with the local community and neighbours to enable young people to receive a warm welcome into their neighbourhood.

The management team monitor and sign appropriate records as part of their internal

quality assurance. Regular visits by the owner of the home and independent advocates take place to provide an additional quality assurance mechanism and include consulting young people wherever possible. The management have a strong commitment to meeting the needs of young people. The level of progress young people have made is a testament to the impact the staff and management have made, in helping young people aspire, irrespective of their background, ethnicity, gender or faith.

The home has a clear, accessible and comprehensive Statement of Purpose and young person's guide that sets out its aims and objectives. These objectives are being utilised in everyday practice, inclusive of ensuring young people are supported to feel safe, protected and well cared for.

The home has taken appropriate action to address previous recommendations arising from last inspection in that, further staff have obtained an appropriate qualification in childcare. Ongoing training in this area is still taking place.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.