

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Russell Shackford
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This service is a young people's home run by a company. It provides three long-term placements for young people who have 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 **good**.

Young people living in this home benefit greatly from an experienced staff group who demonstrate enthusiastically their commitment to addressing welfare issues. Outcomes for young people are good because staff are persevering and supportive, creating opportunities for young people to reach their full potential. Education attendance and achievement, good health and socialisation are increased whilst criminal activity and anti-social behaviours are equally reduced.

Young people confirm that their views are genuinely sought and acted upon. The staff encourage them to make decisions about their lives and influence the way that the home is run.

Staff ensure that young people are looked after in a way that is particular to how they are and want to be. Educational needs are very well met with young people making good progress. The young people benefit greatly from the efforts of the staff to promote the value of education and to encourage good attendance.

The staff work closely with other services to meet the range of young people's needs. Although staff are clearly aware of young people's assessed needs, the quality of written placement plans is inconsistent and not all of them clearly outline how young people's needs will be met. The facilitating of contact is done well. Effective support is in place to help young people learn skills that they will need for later in life.

Good risk assessments and fire safety practices help to keep young people safe. Staff are experienced, well trained and competent. Young people clearly benefit from the

good leadership provided by the manager to a cohesive and adaptable staff team. There is good monitoring to maintain and improve the quality of care in the home.

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 each young person's placement plan is monitored by a key worker in the home who ensures that the requirements of the plan are implemented. In particular, record the evidence of the staff team's contributions. (NMS 25.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people's progress and outcomes are good because staff are persevering and supportive, creating opportunities for young people to reach their full potential. Young people benefit from the discussions and stimulating interactive activities that staff use to build relationships with them. As a result, young people gain good knowledge and understanding of their own backgrounds, they adapt well to new situations and their view of themselves is positive.

Organised activities, such as swimming, football and horse riding, help to keep young people fit and healthy. Young people are encouraged to eat healthy foods and snacks. Young people confirm that they are involved in planning, shopping for and cooking meals. Young people enjoy good health because their health needs are effectively identified and services are provided to meet them. Young people are encouraged and supported to attend routine appointments with dentists, doctors and opticians and, where appropriate, encouraged to take some responsibility for managing their own health needs.

Educational needs are well met with young people making improving progress in attendance and achievement in their education. The staff have worked in a determined manner to ensure that appropriate placements are sourced quickly and, as a result, young people's education is disrupted as little as possible. The impact of this has been greatly improved school attendance and associated socialising, enjoyment and achievements. Young people's friendships made at school have been strengthened by after school socialising at the home or in the local community.

Young people benefit from clear contact arrangements, understanding when they will see significant people, which helps them settle and enjoy seeing their families. Young people say that staff have, 'helped me to keep in touch with people that are important to me by taking and collecting me' and that they, 'can have friends and family come to visit them.' A parent said that, 'the staff are very helpful in helping me to arrange and have regular contact.'

The home has its own life skills plans for young people. These are implemented according to the level of maturity and understanding of the individual. Young people sometimes learn skills through taking part in the tasks of running the home, such as cleaning and cooking. Young people are also given help and support with social skills, laundry, healthy eating, budgeting, clothing care and shopping. Therefore, young people receive care which prepares them well for adulthood.

Quality of care

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

Young people living in this home benefit greatly from an experienced staff group who demonstrate enthusiastically their commitment to addressing young people's care and safety needs. Staff say, 'the best thing about my work is being with and around the young people seeing the progress that they make.' Young people confirm this, saying, 'I get on well with all the staff and they help you if you need things' and, 'there is always someone to talk to if you want.' Young people enjoy warm relationships with staff in the home and there is good rapport between them. Staff speak in a proud manner about their young people and their achievements. Staff say, 'this is a happy home and we have good relationships with lovely young people.'

Young people confirm that their views are genuinely sought and acted upon. The staff are innovative in the way that they help young people to make decisions about their lives and influence the way that the home is run. Staff provide opportunities for daily group and one-to-one discussions, key worker sessions and visits from independent advocacy services. There are also regular young people's meetings. Quality assurance monitoring by the manager includes opportunities for young people to comment upon the quality of care at the home. One young person said, 'I was asked if I would like to choose the bedding and colours for my bedroom'. Any cases where it is not possible to act upon young people's wishes are carefully explained to them. Young people confirm this saying that, 'staff are fair', highlighting examples, such as not allowing age inappropriate computer games.

Young people say that they are confident to complain and understand how to do so. Any complaints received are clearly recorded to reflect the action taken by the staff and the outcomes.

Admissions to the home are planned and the young person and their family, where appropriate, are involved in that planning. Young people can visit the home before they move in to meet people and get information about the home. Staff find out about young people's differences, routines, strengths and areas for development, and use different agencies and resources to help them to meet the young people's needs. Staff are clearly aware of young people's assessed needs and consistently well-written placement plans outline how young people's needs will be met. Focused one-to-one work provides young people with guidance, advice and support. However, the daily records and one-to-one records do not always reflect the content of the care plan and show the full extent of the action taken by the staff to meet the

identified needs of the young person.

Young people's needs and development are reviewed regularly in the light of their care and progress at the home. Following reviews, placement plans are updated in a timely fashion. The reviewing system includes participation in the statutory reviews, internal reviews of the placement plan and discussions with the young person in key worker sessions. Key workers monitor the placement plans and produce monthly summary reports. Statutory case reviews take place within the required timescales to inform those working at the home and others of progress made by young people.

The staff appreciate that the individual young people may have needs arising from diversity. The young people receive individualised care and support. Where necessary, staff commission individual support services involved in the health, care and education of the young people. The home has links with a wide range of helping agencies, and very good practice has helped to quickly provide services to suit each individual young person. Young people confirm that staff provide care and support to them in a way that is particular to them. Staff are aided by external professionals in providing good-quality health care in emotional health. These professionals provide support directly to young people and indirectly by advice supplied to the staff team, to aid positive outcomes for the young people. Good policies and practice around the storage, handling, administration and disposal of medication safeguards young people's welfare.

The staff work in a determined manner to ensure that appropriate education placements are sourced quickly and as a result, young people's education is disrupted as little as possible in order that they can continue to attend and achieve. Staff support young people in education planning meetings or represent their views if they choose not to attend. Contact between the home and a school is frequent and effective. For some this includes a daily telephone call and a visit by a member of staff to the school. This enables staff to support young people successfully with homework or personal targets. A notable area of strength is the staff's close communication and support of other professionals working in education to sustain and increase the young people's time in the provision. The manager has strengthened links with emotional health services that assist the school and home staff in working together to achieve better outcomes for the young people. Staff describe this as, 'very helpful' and say that the impact is that young people, 'enjoy improved emotional well-being and they are being more enthusiastic about school'. The staff make a lot of effort to encourage good attendance and ensure that the young people are well prepared for the school day. Personal education plans are in place and these are reviewed regularly. There are space, resources and facilities at the home to enable the completion of homework. A computer is available for the young people to use for educational purposes and well-monitored internet access is available.

Young people are able to pursue their particular interests and are supported enthusiastically and encouraged by staff to engage in leisure activities. One young person was delighted to have been assisted in choosing and buying a pet to keep at the home. Staff attempt to enable young people to socialise and to build their

esteem and confidence by supporting their individual choices. Young people enjoy playing out with friends in the local area as well as engaging in more formal activities. Examples of organised activities include football, rugby, cinema, shopping, horse riding, paintballing and swimming. There is also a good range of books, DVDs and games available for education and entertainment.

The young people live in a home that is very well located near to shops, leisure, education and employment opportunities. It is on the main bus route to the nearby city centre. The interior and exterior of the home are in a good state of structural and decorative repair. One young person said, 'I like having my own bedroom because it's my own space and it's set out how I like it.' There is a good maintenance and repair programme for the building, furniture and equipment, and any damage is repaired promptly. The garden is well maintained and safe. The home is clean and there are homely touches throughout.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

A notable area of strength is the ability of staff to engage young people in talking through any identified concerns. Young people say that they are safe and feel safe, confirming that they are supported to learn how to keep themselves safe and learn about risks. One young person said, 'I feel very safe here, the staff talk to me about how to keep safe and my mum has her say as well.' Where particular risks are identified, consistently well-written risk assessments are recorded to help the staff understand what action to take to minimise the identified risks. This develops young people's understanding and the reasons adults are concerned. As a result, young people's risk-taking behaviours reduce and they feel cared for and protected.

The provider has very good safeguarding systems and procedures for staff to follow in the event of any allegation or suspicion of abuse. The manager and staff have received child protection training which includes elements of child exploitation and online protection. Staff demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of the safeguarding procedures to promote and protect young people's safety. Anti-bullying training is provided for staff and effective policies and procedures support this. Young people say that bullying is not accepted and that it is often on the agenda of their meetings to make sure everyone is aware of this. There is good written guidance for staff to follow in the event of unauthorised absence. This is supported by individualised risk assessment records.

Sanctions are relevant and reflect the age and understanding of the young people. Any sanctions imposed are reviewed regularly for appropriateness and effectiveness. Personalised behaviour management plans are used. They contain good, individualised details for staff to follow when managing young people's behaviour. It is very rare that physical restraint is used to manage behaviour at the home. Staff are trained in the provider's de-escalation policy and authorised intervention techniques. Record keeping is good and there is evidence that it is monitored well to identify patterns or trends that can be used to support young people further.

Regular fire safety checks, general checks and maintenance arrangements ensure the home is physically safe and is kept safe. All staff have received fire safety training to enable them to minimise the risks to young people in the event of a fire at the home. One young person confirmed this saying, 'I have been involved in quite a few fire drills to make sure I know what to do.'

All staff are appropriately recruited and undergo suitable Criminal Records Bureau checks to ensure that they are suitable to work with young people.

Leadership and management

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

A Statement of Purpose is available to inform professionals and members of the public about how care is provided at the home. There is a good children's guide to the statement which is appropriate to the age and understanding of the children accommodated. Young people receive a copy of it before they come to live at the home so that they know what to expect if they go to live there.

There is a consistent staff team which has been added to recently to broaden the range of skills and experience among its members. New members of staff receive good quality induction training before commencing work with the young people. Staff refer to written guidance frequently during discussion and give examples of how it is implemented in practice. Management support and supervision are described as, 'very good' and, 'one of the best things about the home' by staff who clearly value the beneficial contributions of the manager.

The young people are receiving care from competent staff that are experienced and appropriately trained to meet their needs. All staff are trained in a wide variety of safety and childcare subjects. An ongoing programme of regular refresher training is provided in a range of subjects to enhance the staff team's competency to meet the needs of the young people.

The manager has an effective system to monitor, report and evaluate the administration systems of the home and any areas of weakness identified are promptly acted upon. This is supported by regular unannounced visits from the provider to monitor and improve the quality of care at the home. These effective evaluations help to ensure that standards at the home continue to improve. Service development plans are derived from this monitoring.

Young people's case file records and other written documentation are of a good standard. This facilitates good communication with other professionals as well as ensuring young people have a permanent and secure record of their history. Good cross referencing of all documentation enables the management team and staff to evaluate and monitor young people's progress. Young people's individual case files are confidentially stored and are arranged in a manner that makes them useable by staff and yet accessible to young people. The young people know that they can have

access to their records. The young people's individual case records reflect their development and progress.

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.