

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Chris Scully
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home provides care and accommodation for up to four young people aged 10 to 17 years, who may experience emotional and 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 **good**.

Young people are safe and feel safe. This is because of the effective safeguarding and missing from care procedures that are robustly implemented as well as the health and safety checks implemented within the home. Though there are some minor maintenance issues within the home.

Young people enjoy positive relationships with staff. They know they can talk to staff about any concerns they may have and know that these will be taken seriously, for example, incidents of bullying outside of the home. Young people enjoy the opportunities to spend time outside of the home with family and friends.

Young people's needs are met well through personalised care planning, which meets their personal preferences and individual needs. Consequently, young people make good progress across all aspects of their welfare and development. This is supported by staff's understanding of young people's diverse needs. This ensures they continue to receive the help, guidance and support they need on a daily basis.

The home is well managed and is appropriately monitored; although, shortfalls in some records and documentation have not been identified through monitoring; for example, shortfalls in first aid records, missing from care risk assessments and return to care reports, pathway plans and key worker records.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure the home provides a comfortable environment and is well maintained in particular, the organisation of the lounge/games room, bathroom and wasps nest in the rear yard (NMS 10.3)
- ensure there are systems in place to monitor the quality and adequacy of record keeping in particular, missing from care risk assessments, return to care record and key worker records (NMS 22.1)
- ensure there is a written record of all treatment and first aid given or offered to young people (NMS 6.15)
- ensure monitoring of the home identifies any concerns, to identify patterns and trends and immediate action is taken to address any issues raised by monitoring, in particular shortfalls in records are noted and the action taken to rectify this (NMS 21.1)
- ensure each young person's placement plan is monitored by a key worker who ensures the requirements of the plan are implemented in the day-to-day care of the young people; in particular pathway plans. (NMS 25.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people are developing a positive self-view. They form positive relationships with staff. Young people who have moved on to other placements developed very positive self-images, which enabled them to successfully move on to the next phase in their lives.

Young people have strong links with their families and friends and relish the opportunities to see them on a regular basis. Contact arrangements are well managed and take into account each young person's individual needs. Social workers are complimentary about staff, with regard to their commitment to help young people develop and sustain positive family ties. Consequently, this has enabled young people to move back home with their families, which was their personal goal.

Young people have an understanding of their own health care needs and are generally fit and well. Young people's health has improved as they are now up to date with their immunisations. However, despite advice and support from staff some choose to continue to smoke, having made informed choices about the health risks associated with this. They are aware of where to seek additional support if they need it such as sexual health clinics and smoking cessation. Staff say young people are confident to make their own health care appointments and seek advice when necessary.

The home provides a wide range of healthy meals and snacks. Although, rather than return home for meals young people are currently choosing to eat with their families

and friends. Young people are always offered a meal when they come home. Young people are encouraged to help prepare meals with staff to support their independence.

Currently, some young people are not in education or training. This is despite staff's best efforts to engage them in their education. Social workers acknowledged this is a long standing issue, beginning prior to young people residing here. However, young people are beginning to talk to connexions workers about the options available to them. Young people who have recently left made good progress with their education and their attendance was much improved in relation to their starting points. Consequently they have remained engaged in their education since leaving.

Young people are being well prepared to develop the skills they need for independence. For example, they are encouraged to carry out tasks such as doing their own laundry, travelling independently, managing their own money and general household tasks. This increases their confidence and self-esteem as they prepare for adult life.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy positive, constructive relationships with staff. They are confident to talk to staff about everyday events and any issues that may be concerning them. Young people's individual well-being is central to practice. Staff see young people in a positive and realistic light. Staff have a detailed knowledge of the young people they work with, ensuring that young people receive good individual support and guidance.

Young people feel valued and listened to as they are regularly consulted on all aspects of their care and organisation of the home. Young people are aware of the systems in place should they wish to make a complaint and that it may not always be possible to act upon their wishes. Key working sessions provide one-to-one support and opportunities to discuss things privately with staff. For some young people these are more informal discussions to meet their individual needs. However, these are not always recorded or lack sufficient detail around the discussions and future targets for young people.

Young people's pathway plans from placing authorities provide a clear picture of their individual needs. Young people have contributed to their plans and are encouraged to sign them. However, records do not always make clear the specific targets for young people, for example, opening a bank account and who is responsible for supporting them in completing this. This is a recording issue as staff are very clear on what the young person needs to achieve and how they are supporting them in this.

Staff have high, but achievable aspirations for young people's education and training. They work well with schools and agencies such as connexions to ensure young

people get the right help and support. This means young people are generally able to overcome any barriers to their learning and engage with their education.

Staff work well with young people to help them to understand why they are placed in this home. Young people are supported to attend their review meetings and to contribute to them. Staff regularly consult with social workers to ensure young people receive the right level of support. Social workers say the home has worked well with them to ensure young people's needs are continually met.

Young people are offered a wide range of activities both in the home and community such as sports, drama and days out. Young people currently residing at the home are choosing to spend their time with family and friends rather than specific activities.

Young people live in a healthy environment which promotes their physical health and emotional well-being. They are fully supported to develop healthier lifestyles. Young people are registered with health care professionals and have a good understanding of how to seek additional support or advice. The systems for the administration and storage of medication are secure and mean young people receive any medication at the right time for them. Although, the recording of any first aid provided or offered to young people is not robust.

Young people live in a comfortable, homely family house in a residential neighbourhood. The house is generally decorated and furnished to a good standard. Young people are very pleased that they are able personalise their own rooms, which clearly reflect their individuality.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are safeguarded because of staff's secure understanding of the home's safeguarding and child protection procedures. This means they are clear about the action to take should they have any concerns about a young person. Staff preserve the confidentiality, dignity and privacy of young people. Positive relationships with social workers mean staff are fully aware of any issues which may impact upon young people's safety or well-being. This enables them to take appropriate action to support each young person.

Young people have gone missing from care. The home works well with police and other agencies to ensure young people return home quickly and safely. Staff are proactive should a young person be missing; they actively search for them to try and locate them. This is echoed by Police missing from care coordinators and social workers who say staff do everything they can to help young people return home safely. The home ensures the police are made aware of any address where a young person may be and in the past this has enabled them to issue harbouring notices to help keep young people safe.

Staff are aware of the risks associated with each young person and are working with

them to help them reduce these and keep themselves safe. Records pertaining to young people being missing are generally appropriately maintained though there are some gaps within the risk assessments and return to care reports. However, these are recording issues and do not impact upon the care provided.

Young people know and understand the house rules, for example, the times to be home each night. Staff implement clear, consistent boundaries, which means that young people know what is expected of them and what is unacceptable. Staff are positive role models who are very good at encouraging positive behaviour by offering high levels of praise and encouragement. Consequently, young people are able to consider their behaviour and how they can handle situations differently in the future. This is evident from the minimal use of sanctions within the home. Any issues of bullying are effectively managed by the home. Staff are proactive in contacting school to eradicate any issues and young people say, 'Feel a lot better with how staff had helped me but, 'x' is still horrible.'

Young people live in a physically safe environment. They are protected from any hazards by a range of detailed health and safety procedures, risk assessments and checks. There are some maintenance issues with regards to the wasp nest in the rear yard, the bath panel is showing signs of wear and the tiles around the shower need attention. Staff carry out regular health and safety checks to ensure the premises are safe and young people know what to do in case of an emergency.

The recruitment and selection arrangements for people working at the home are thorough to make sure young people are protected. The provider ensures that staff have the qualifications, skills and experience to meet the needs of individual young people. The vetting of visitors to the home is robust and ensures the safety and well-being of young people.

Leadership and management

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

The home is managed by a qualified and competent Registered Manager. The home has an appropriate development plan in place, which includes an agenda for improvements. For example, The Registered Manager has identified that recording is an issue within the home, training opportunities are planned to assist staff in developing better recording skills. This demonstrates the home's commitment and capacity for on-going improvement and the plan shows how this will improve the outcomes for young people. The home is working with an independent safeguarding consultant and has revamped their child protection, safeguarding and whistle blowing policies which are now being shared with staff.

Staff benefit from regular staff meetings, supervision and personal development plans, which mean their training needs are regularly reviewed and addressed. There is a rolling programme of training provided, including refresher training in mandatory areas. Staff have also undertaken training on person centred training and autism. This has enhanced their knowledge and understanding of these areas and enables

them to provide effective support to young people.

The home has a detailed Statement of Purpose and children's guide. Information is regularly reviewed and updated. This means young people, their families, placing authorities and other professionals have a clear understanding of the type of care and support provided to young people.

Two recommendations were raised at the last inspection in relation to the new lounge area and the recording of young people's clothing allowances. The new lounge area is more homely, but still feels neither a games room nor lounge. This is an on-going piece of work within the home to decide on whether this should remain together or separate. The recording of young people's clothing allowances has improved; this means there is now a clear audit trail with regards to the payments in and out.

Records and documentation are generally appropriately maintained and provide insight into young people's time in the home. The home is generally appropriately monitored on a monthly basis by the Registered Manager and Registered Individual. However, the systems for monitoring records are not robust and have not identified the shortfalls from this inspection with regards to the adequacy of some records identified in this report. These are recording issues and the effects of these on young people are minimised because of staff's knowledge and understanding of young people's diverse and specific needs. There are appropriate systems in place to notify Ofsted of any significant issues with regards to young people.

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.